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# KARAKORO AT HOME IN JAPAN

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*Proprietor: Y. Nakatsuchi*

*Established: 1914*

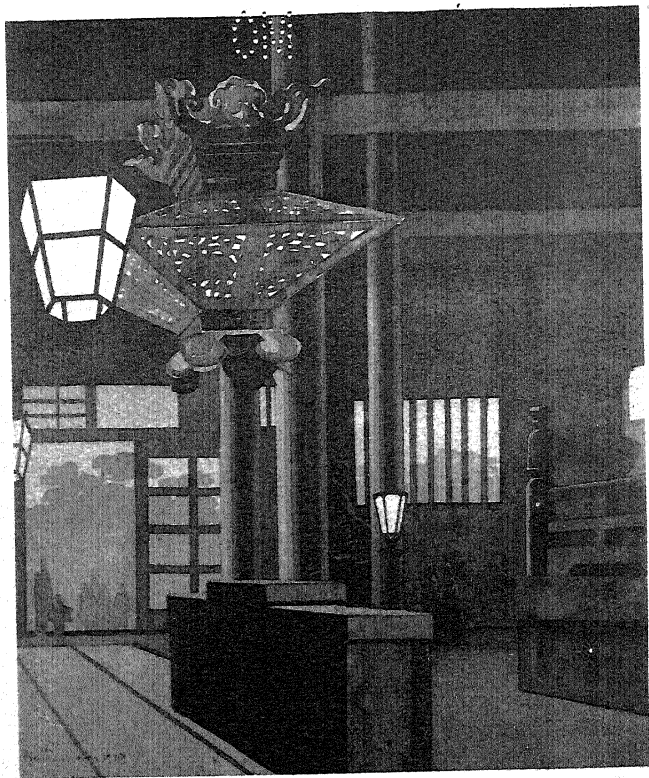
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THE OFFERTORY-BOX OF ZENKOJI TEMPLE

# KARAKORO

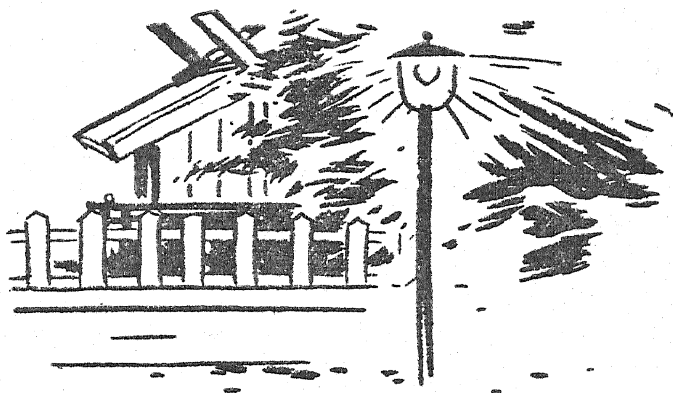
*At Home in Japan*

by

HENRY NOËL

*Illustrations by*

PIETER IRWIN BROWN



THE HOKUSEIDO PRESS

1939

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915.2  
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BINDERY MAY 5 1941

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*Gift Kansas City Star*  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the editors of *Chambers's Journal*, *The Japan Times Weekly*, *The Tourist* and *Walkabout* for permission to reprint, sometimes in a revised state, material which originally appeared in their publications.

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# PART ONE





## CHAPTER I

### *At Home in the City*

“**B**ANZAI meet you Yokohama noon.” This radiogram from my friends in Tokyo reached me when Mt. Fuji was still visible off our port side. There was a note of cheerful optimism in “*Banzai*”—a word I was later to hear as often as *arigato*.

After the excitement of landing in a new country, the drive up to the capital, past an almost continuous line of shops and factories, was monotonous enough. On reaching Tokyo, we found the streets already lit, although twilight had hardly set in. My friend's house in native style looked very frail, tucked in a street behind the British Embassy. On our entering its stone-paved lobby the inner *shoji* of white paper were slid open noiselessly, and the maid bowed as we ascended the elevated floor, leaving our shoes on a large stepping-stone.

I had brought some things from Europe for the children, which they accepted with polite hesitation. Then they left the room to unwrap them in secret, returning empty-handed, to say “*Arigato gozaimasu*” and bow in unison, according to Japanese etiquette.

“So you want to live in Japanese style?” said Mrs. Y. doubtfully, pouring me another cup of green tea. The kettle sang cheerily atop the chest-like piece of furniture that contained a charcoal brazier, as well as a hot water tank for warming saké bottles. It was comfortably warm sitting on cushions beside it, with the resilient mats of rice straw beneath, and I forgot February weather.

I said that at least I wanted to try.

“Because you are too tall for Japanese *futon*,” she went on, while Yuki-ko turned away to hide a smile. “We will go to the *depahto* tomorrow and have your bedding made to order.” For like their *geta* and their *kimono*, the beds of the Japanese are of one standard size.

Ma-chan, their servant, would fix me up a bed with some of their *futon* for tonight. We went out to look at my six-mat room in the hotel-pension up the street, and found it quite bare. There was no *kakemono* in the alcove of honour, the hanging scroll on which is brushed a poem or a conventional landscape. For the furniture of a Japanese room is so simple that one always takes it with him, even the bed, which is folded into a special canvas bag, a familiar piece of luggage seen on railway platforms.

The hotel servant came up with the necessary furnishings loaned me for the time being by the landlady: a square cushion, a glazed blue *hibachi*

nearly full of fine ash, a basket of charcoal and a pair of brass chopsticks. From their box at one end of the balcony she pulled out the storm shutters, which she sent flying in their grooves with an awful clatter until six of them formed a solid wall. Yet even with the glass *shoji* shut, it was none too warm, for the building had weathered the Great Earthquake and was consequently rather loose-jointed.

Ma-chan and my servant arranged a bed almost long enough for a giant, by making it in two sections. A sheet as rough as a hand towel covered the thin mattresses. Over me I would have a woolen blanket and two wadded quilts almost as thick as the mattresses themselves. For pillow, they gave me a cylindrical bag filled with dried beans. Well, I would not fall out of bed if I had a nightmare, as the *futon* was hardly six inches high. When everything was ready for the night, both servants bowed on hands and knees outside the door and wished me honourable repose before sliding it to noiselessly. Excited giggling could be heard as they pattered downstairs.

I had just put out the light when the door was opened. It was the old landlady, who must have thought I was lonely on my first night in Japan. She put down a tray bearing a teapot and two cups at the head of the bed.

“*Gomen nasai!*” (Excuse me!) she said. “It is very late. But a young man downstairs who speaks English would like to meet you. May I have him come up?”

I could not refuse, and received the visitor in dressing gown. He was a graduate of a law school and was looking for a position with a lawyer. In the meantime he worked all day at the information desk of a department store and read his Civil Code at night.

“Do you like to sing?” he asked after we had introduced ourselves to each other sufficiently. We looked over a book of popular American songs he had brought along. His favourite was Old Black Joe, which we hummed together, sitting cross-legged and hugging the *hibachi* for warmth. After going through much of the book, Mr. S. excused himself, and invited me to call on him the following evening. He would like to teach me some Japanese songs.

Japanese hotels have no public dining hall; one has all meals brought up to his rooms. My landlady was sceptical when—mainly out of curiosity—I asked for a complete Japanese breakfast next morning. To convince her that I wasn’t totally unfamiliar with the arcana of Japanese cuisine, I named two dishes I had eaten once at a Franco-Japanese restaurant in the Latin Quarter.

She waited on me herself, sitting beside the rice bucket with heavy lid, to keep my bowl filled. Breakfast was an imposing affair: I counted nine different cups and bowls artistically arranged on the black lacquer tray that stood on its own legs six inches high. There was bean soup in a lacquer bowl, a raw egg already beaten up to pour over the rice, some pickled horse-radish, a little box containing thin sheets of pressed seaweed, and *shoyu*, the ubiquitous soy bean sauce. To eat the seaweed, one is supposed to dip it in the *shoyu*, then lay it wet side down on the rice which one pinches inside it. The result should resemble a neat green cartridge filled with rice; but if my landlady had been looking forward to a skilful manipulation of chopsticks on my part, she was sorely disappointed.

\* \* \*

I heard every sound of the street as plainly as if the room had no walls at all, and for many evenings would lay awake imagining who the people were who sang or beat clappers or played so late on flutes.

One evening while at the home of my host we heard the cry, "*Amai! Amai!*" Elder sister gave Ma-chan three sen and sent her out with a large pitcher, which she brought back filled with a grey, milky liquid, piping hot. It is called *ama-sake* "sweet saké," but it is really only sugar and

barley water, the favourite beverage of children on winter evenings.

Another pedlar who is heard on winter nights and makes it possible for the children to stay up a little later is the sweet potato man. He does his rounds pushing a little cart from which escapes an inviting aroma when he removes the oven's heavy lid.

"Do they have sweet potatoes in America?" asked little Masako.

"Yes," piped up her brother, "and some people even eat the skins!" Masako looked at me with round eyes, fully expecting me to do likewise.

I learned to distinguish the pedlars with flutes; one played lively airs that had a thin, reedy quality around midnight. It was the *shina-soba* man, who sold buckwheat noodles in Chinese style. He kept them in one of the drawers of his shop on wheels. Before bedtime, people stopped under his roof and consumed a bowl of steaming noodles by the light of his oil lamp. The other musician was the blind masseur, who announced his presence with two or three long-drawn out notes on a bamboo *shakuhachi*.

Every night at about eleven o'clock, the penetrating clap, clap, clap-clap of wood on wood rhythmically announced the approach of the fire-watcher. All during winter and spring, I merely listened to this "all's well" signal, as the wooden

shutters were bolted fast and it was too cold to get up and open them. At last I saw him, a figure in short coat and tight-fitting trousers. Hooked to his belt was a long lantern of red paper, with a candle inside. What is a more pleasant sound when snugly abed than that of the *hi-no-ban*, now near, now far away, especially on cold nights just before dropping off to sleep, confident that the dreaded Flower of Yedo was not abroad! If fire did break out and the night was rent with bells and siren, the *hi-no-ban* would soon come by with his clappers and calm one's anxiety by crying out the name of the quarter where the fire was.

Better than a clock is the *tofu-ya*, the bean curd vendor, who blows two long notes on a brass horn promptly at six each morning. When he stops under my window, I know that there will be bean curd in the morning soup. He wears a white coat, white shorts, and thick-soled *tabi* with divided toe like a mitten. He is an energetic man for his size, being not quite five feet tall, and his wooden boxes nearly touch the ground as they swing from the flexible pole over his shoulder. In front is a round, shallow receptacle of unpainted wood spotlessly white, with copper rings shining. From the other end swing two or three square boxes fitting into each other, that look like treasure chests with their rich copper decorations.

Our servant goes out with a plate, and the *tofu-ya* sets down his boxes and lays the pole across them. He cuts a piece out of the thick cake of *tofu*, that looks something like cottage cheese. With his only instrument, a wide copper knife, he lays it in her dish without mishap, and there divides it further into convenient cubes.

In early morning one also hears the piercing cry of "*Natto! Natto!*" that sometimes mingles with the plaintive blasts from the *tofu-ya*. A youth rides by on a bicycle, with a basketful of *natto* wrapped up in straw bundles. I asked for a sample one morning. That was the only time the servant ever brought me up for breakfast a mess of these fermented beans. One eats them with soy bean sauce and mustard, and I admired the landlady, who had five sen's worth every morning.

Pedlars pass by our windows all day, some regularly, others only on rare occasions. Once on a wet day a little man with his kimono pulled up over his knees and tucked under his sash, plodded slowly up with a basket under his arm. His song was slow and full of melancholy, like that of the Paris rag-buyer. I asked the maid what he was singing, but she only turned red with suppressed merriment. Finally she explained that he was not singing, but merely crying his wares.

The landlady, however, who had already given



me a minute account of her experiences in the Great Earthquake, was more communicative. She even rubbed some ink on her stone and brushed these words for me on gauze-like paper:

“*Asari, shijimi, yo!*  
*Hamaguri, mukimi, yo . . . o!*”

They are the names of various clams and small shell-fish mostly found in shallow waters. *Mukimi* is a general term for shell-fish stripped of their shells. *Asari* are very small clams and too much trouble to eat, but they make excellent flavouring in soy bean soup.

The pipe-mender was the principal afternoon visitor. He is heard a long way off because of a steam whistle fixed to his repair shop on wheels. It blows continually, dispensing him from any cry to distinguish his identity. The two-wheeled cart he pushes up our street once a week consists mostly of drawers topped with a glass case. A charcoal fire serves to mend the pipes as well as generate steam in a small copper boiler for the whistle. There is always plenty of work for the pipe-mender. In every house, pipes are continually subject to hard knocks against the *hibachi* to empty the ashes, for the thimble-size bowl needs refilling after three or four puffs. And some people knock harder than others.

A modern street crier is the man who sells extras. Although he has no regular time schedule, he always follows the main artery of our quarter, with frequent shouts of "*Gogai, Gogai!*" (Extra!) Everyone is on the alert when they hear his five brass bells jingling on the end of a cord. The maid must be ready with her two sen when he flies by, for he never retraces his steps. The ringing stops only during the short time it takes for the transaction, after which the indefatigable runner is off faster than ever to make up for lost time. On a winter evening his bells in the distance remind one of a horse-drawn sleigh.

## CHAPTER II

### *The Honourable Bath*

“**H**AVE a bath before you leave,” suggested my host some time after supper. This was a great mark of hospitality, but I did not relish the prospect. My head was full of stories I had been told about the Japanese bath, and how one was parboiled in its depths.

“After you,” I said, vainly hoping that he would take me at my word. Even so, the water might not be bearable until mother and children and servants had their baths. “Please go first,” insisted my host. There was nothing to do but accept. It was an honour for guests to bathe first, when the water was at its hottest.

“There is a cold water tap if you find it too hot,” added Mrs. H., reading my thoughts. But to put too much cold water in would spoil it for my host, who is the only member of the family that can adjust the temperature of the bath to his taste, as he uses it first.

After undressing in a little antechamber, I pushed back the sliding glass door to the bath and stepped down. The room was quite cold, with

windows of translucent glass around the two walls that let in the wind. The stone floor was covered with a latticed platform of wood. There was a wooden bucket with brass bands, a small stool, and a long-handled dipper. The bath was a great square box more than four feet deep, made of natural pine boards immaculately white, dovetailed without nails. The tub was covered with three thick planks, while from one end, the top of which was fixed, rose a stove-pipe. The stove which heated the water was inside the bath itself, merely partitioned off by a wooden barrier! An iron door on the outside protruded from the lower part of the bath. Coal, no doubt, was the fuel used.

The room slowly filled with steam when the lid was taken off, and I sat on the stool and filled the little bucket to wash myself. I rinsed off with great care with the dipper, for not the slightest sign of soap should trouble the limpid water of the bath. I was almost glad to enter, as it was none too warm outside. The water I thought was less unbearable when I put in the whole foot than when only my toes were in, so I plunged in both legs. I would probably not die from the shock, as my Japanese friends all seemed to survive.

But it took some time before immersing altogether. Much water went overboard when I did, and my knees nearly reached my chin. The tub

had not been designed for me. Still it was deep, the water line reached my neck, which felt as if it were being cut with a very sharp knife, and my toes, in close propinquity with the stove on the other side of the wooden grating, felt frost-bitten. I did not linger long, and the most pleasant part of all was dressing with utmost comfort in the cold room, as I felt like a furnace inside.

\*       \*       \*

There was no bath in my apartment, and although my host lived a few doors away, I could not always be using his. But Tokyo had over 2,600 bath-houses, I learned, and I had only to walk to the first tall chimney in my neighbourhood in order to find one. Every citizen took one bath a day, according to statistics, though this included those with baths of their own.

For six sen, one can pass all day in the *sentō*, as the public-bath is called, for it is open from morning till midnight. Like the *sudatoria* of ancient Rome, it is a kind of club for those who cannot afford a bath of their own. There friends meet to talk over politics and the events of the day. Bathing has become such an inherent custom that even the labourer would rather go without eating once in a while than miss his evening bath, his only recreation and a means of keeping fit. Business men

as well as students find time for a leisurely hour or two in the morning when the fresh water has been run in and has not been tempered with cold. For like the samurai of old these aristocrats of the bath want their water as hot as they possibly can have it.

In the early days of Japan's history, believers in Buddhism were asked to give baths to the priests as expiation for sins, so the bath is not a product of the Tokugawa period. As early as 727 A.D., the Empress Komyo had a dream, in which she vowed to bathe a large gathering of poor people. She fulfilled this vow during her life, and encouraged her court and the nobility to bathe the poor. Buddhist sects began building magnificent bath-houses for beggars and destitute people, some of which are still standing at Nara, Kyoto and Kamakura. Bath-houses in those days were really *sudatoria*; the bathers lay on latticed platforms built over huge open vats of boiling water. It was only in the middle of the eighteenth century that immersion in the water itself came into vogue.

\*       \*       \*

A few nights later the servant came up in great excitement. Mr. S. was just leaving for the *senjo*, and wouldn't I like to go with him? Especially as she had already asked him to wait for me. I had been introduced to Mr. S. previously,

so I went along. It was like a party, both of us with towel and soap, and a vast paper umbrella against sudden showers.

A kingly building is the bath, with its heavy yet gracefully curving roof high above the houses about. Seated at the entrance between two doors, with the characters 'Man' and 'Woman' written over them, is a plump little girl in white apron. She presents us with a large wooden tablet with a number on it in exchange for our foot-gear, which she stores in a shelf. The floor and walls of the hall are filled with wooden clogs of different heights and sizes, and my shoes look very ridiculous and forlorn among them. A sliding door, and we step up a foot on the soft rice mats into one side of a vast room two stories high. Between the doors stands a counter, behind which presides a matronly woman, who can see into both sides of the bath-house at once from her place of vantage on a platform. The floor is covered with deep, round baskets filled with clothes. On the wall a large sign reads: 'Men, 6 sen; children under 12, 4 sen; infants, 2 sen.'

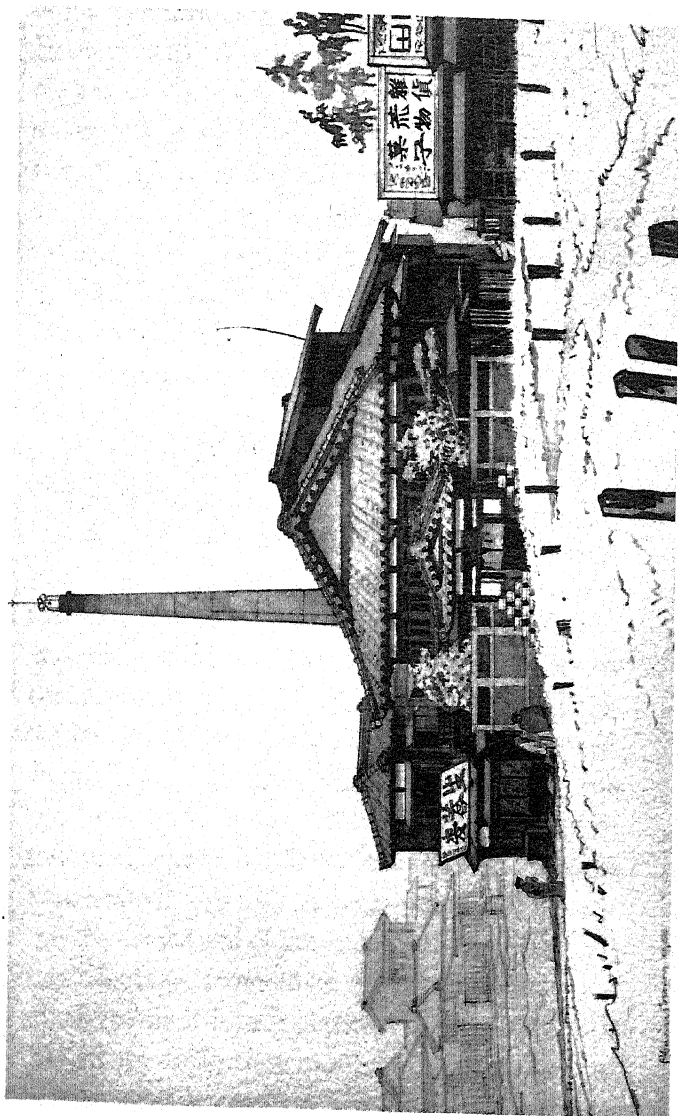
A girl tosses us our baskets, and we begin undressing before the abstract gaze of the matronly lady. I thought she glanced once in our direction. Did she believe in the old superstition that foreigners had tails, and wore long trousers to hide

them in? Perhaps she was merely amused by my long legs. But there is no self-consciousness among the Japanese, and it is only since the Restoration that men and women have been segregated in the bath-houses of large cities. Their attitude toward the human body resembles somewhat that of the ancient Greeks. Nudity is seen, but not looked at: to take a bath one must disrobe. When the law of segregation of the sexes was first applied, it is said that a rope was merely strung across the common pool, showing how little the Japanese point of view resembled that of the West.

Sliding glass doors separate the dressing room from the bath proper, which is so filled with steam that the bathers can hardly be distinguished. We soon join them, for the dressing room is as cold as out-of-doors. The walls are of spotless white tiles, and bright-coloured mosaics decorate the slanting floor. Along one wall runs a long row of taps of hot and cold water, two feet from the floor, before which men and boys are sitting in every stage of washing. They are using the familiar wooden buckets bound with copper rings; some are shaving before a low mirror. Above all is a confused sound of running water and emptying of buckets.

“But they are not yellow!” one might be tempted to exclaim on first entering a public bath. They are of all shades of brown and ochre; many





PUBLIC BATH-HOUSE



indeed are surprisingly pink, save for bronzed faces. Here not only all class differences, but even those of race are forgotten between these four walls of steam, where Malay, Mongol and Indo-European rub elbows in silent familiarity.

“You take your towel in with you,” assured my friend as I was looking for a dry place to put it. And I learned that you not only use your towel to wash with, but to dry yourself afterwards. The Japanese towel is only a narrow piece of cotton cloth with some flowers or trees printed on it in blue; it has nothing of the luxurious warmth of its Turkish brother.

We were soon lost with the rest in a sea of suds. The Japanese seem to be economical in everything save soap and water. Taps are continually used, and bucket after bucket is emptied. No wonder that the management of a certain student's home for Japanese in Paris posted a notice begging boarders to draw less water for their morning bath. But in this country, seven-tenths of which is mountainous, and where there is an abundant rainfall, the entire population may bathe as much as it wishes.

In the far end of the room is the pool of white tiles, standing about three feet high. Above it a gigantic mural in oils depicts a mountain torrent. My friend squats close to the brim before entering and splashes water over himself. I do likewise,

and find it helpful in getting used to the high temperature.

"If you find it too hot, you can enter the shallow part," suggests S-san. For one end of the pool is divided off for children. But after the first shock it is not too unpleasant, if I sit still, as the slightest motion makes the water seem much hotter. All about us are smiling heads, seemingly floating on the surface, eight or nine of them, and room to spare, as the bath is deep. Suddenly I feel a distinct hot current strike me in the back, as if some unseen tap had been opened. There was one in the corner, but it was not running. My friend notices my astonishment and points to a small notice on the wall behind me. Four Chinese characters in red explain: "Take care! Boiling mouth." This opening, somewhere down below, pours forth fresh water every once in a while, my companion explained, and the sign is directly over the outlet.

We get out, both very red, and perspiration runs into our eyes. The soap felt very refreshing as we began washing all over again. "We will take one more dip before leaving," said S. "That is the regular order." My muscles were so relaxed that I felt limp all over, and I was so warm that the damp towel dried me in no time.

After their bath, the Japanese are rather quiet,

and surrender themselves meekly for another five sen to the luxury of a masseur. He is usually a wiry young fellow in white shorts, with a large stomach band to prevent him from catching cold, as his many duties oblige him to go in and out of the warm room. He squats behind his client, who settles down on an overturned bucket, and begins washing his back, after which he pounds on it with both fists in rapid fire, up and down the spinal column. Then, with the sides of his palms, he chops away on the patient's shoulders, kneads the nape of his neck with his fingers, and ends up with several great resounding slaps, which bring out a few "Ahs" of satisfaction.

The public bath is always filled with children. They like bathing and scrubbing, and it is marvelous to see the vigour with which they wash their neck and ears. While still young they become used to temperatures unbearable to full-grown Occidentals, and it is rare that the cold water is turned on when those beginners, ten months old, go in with papa with perfect unconcern. Father, of course, enjoys it most when the heat makes him sigh with pleasure and gives him a sun-burned appearance. A little boy, being taken into the deep part, which is made cool enough for him, looks first at the running tap, then at his father, as if to say, "Isn't it time you turned it off now?" Finally, the maid's face ap-

pears out of the steam like a ghost, to tell him that it is bedtime. And the young son of Yedo is taken off to be dressed, not without very audible protests. Old men barely able to walk come to the bath-house as well as babies who have hardly begun, and many are the examples of filial piety, that first Oriental virtue. Here a young boy is very painstakingly washing his old grandfather, while another is pounding away with all his might on the back of his elder brother.

\* \* \*

Conversation never lags in this democratic club, and one makes friends easily. The atmosphere is so genial that bits of song rise unconsciously with the steam. There is a saying that one never knows the Japanese well until one has bathed with them. Where outside they might never speak to a foreigner first, in the bath all embarrassment is forgotten.

One night, after the first little shock upon entering the water, I was leaning back on the brim with sighs of relaxation and well-being, when through the steam my eyes met those of the only other bather in the water at the time. We smiled spontaneously. "*Atsui!*" he exclaimed. I agreed that it was warm, and we were friends. "Where are you from?" was his next question. Then, "You

“speak Japanese well.” I did not protest. The atmosphere of the bath probably gave him that idea. When I left the pool he came out after me, and sat beside a tap next to mine to wash. But he only scrubbed at his toes half-heartedly, without speaking. Suddenly he excused himself and entered the pool again in great haste. I had brought him out too soon! I learned that according to bath etiquette, friends should leave the water together, on mutual agreement. My friend came back later, grinning, and began scrubbing his scalp with great zest. He was our grocer.

I went to our bath on the fifth of May, the Boys' Festival, when all Tokyo is a sea of carps, giant cloth bags of black and gold and scarlet, twisting and undulating in the breeze from their moorings on house-tops, flag-poles, smoke-stacks, and even the masts of ships in the bay. There was one soaring from the tall chimney of the bath-house, and directly under its big brother, fluttered a baby carp, that announced a new arrival in the family.

Inside, the floor of the *sen*to reminded me of the Place de la Madeleine after the flower market, strewn as it was with the bright green leaves of the iris. Always a vivid green, the long, pointed leaf of this flower suggests the blade of a sword, and is believed to ward off all disease and insure long life. The bath was crowded as never before with young

men and boys, accidentally emptying buckets of water on each other as they rinsed off at close quarters. Those issuing from the pool were covered with iris leaves, which float on the water and accumulate over the drain running across the tiled floor. Boys were writing mottoes with pieces of leaves by sticking them on the wall, and depicting warriors' faces with fierce moustaches.



## CHAPTER III

### *The Art of House-Building*

THE labourers of Japan sing and work in unison as much as they can. With rythmical movements they economize their strength, and continue steadily for long periods with the least effort. Who has not seen the men along the railway lines repairing the roadbed or laying ties, by lifting and dropping their picks all at the same time? A single metallic blow is all one hears as the train rushes by them, and perhaps a note or two of their plaintive singing.

I was awakened one morning by singing that reminded me of the men on the railways. It was a monotonous air endlessly repeated and punctuated by ponderous thuds at regular intervals. In the field opposite my window were about ten women, their heads wrapped in cotton towels. A primitive kind of pile-driver made of trees bound together with hemp stood in their midst. With the help of pulleys, a pile was being driven by a massive tree trunk attached to a long pole that went high in the air as each woman pulled on her strand of hemp rope. One of them, who always sang a short solo

before each verse, regulated the time of rest. After her the others took up the song and began pulling.

This went on for two or three days. The round white seal—the mark of the guild—on the back of their coats bobbed up and down as their wearers strained at the ropes. It was going to be a house of some importance, for ordinary ones do not require such foundations. When the last stone had been imbedded in the soft volcanic earth of Tokyo's suburbs, the carpenters arrived. It was early spring, the traditional time for building, when there were usually some fine days before the "plum rain" set in.

In a few hours they had set up their work shop. Their tools were few and most simple, yet with such primitive instruments in comparison to the complicated drills and planes of Occidental carpenters, the Japanese are the greatest architects in wood the world has ever known. The temples and pagodas hundreds of years old that have resisted countless earthquakes, typhoons and other calamities and still raise their ponderous yet graceful roofs, are built of such tools as these: double-edged saws with long handles and planes made of wood.

\* \* \*

The garden wall was completed first, so that work could go on without outside interference.

From my second storey window I saw them build the roof first of all. The roof for a fine home receives much attention, and is the most complicated part of the edifice. So a beautiful one is always assembled first on the ground as a trial. When they completed it, except for the laying of the tiles, every piece of wood was numbered. Then the whole roof was taken apart and laid aside, ready to be put together again when the time came.

Temple roofs are always assembled before the rest of the building. I had once during a walk in the suburbs seen carpenters putting the finishing touches to a vast temple roof laying on the grass in an empty field. There was no sign of any temple nearby. A few days later I passed the same field: the roof had disappeared, or nearly so, all its parts being neatly stacked in a pile. Thus all difficulties that might have been encountered during the construction of the roof were already solved with the greatest convenience in this trial on the ground. In the building of temples this is necessary, to create without fault that graceful sweep of the eaves which only carpenters skilled in the traditional building art handed down through the centuries can accomplish.

It doesn't take long to build houses of wood and paper. Ten days later the countless uprights that will hold up the heavy tiled roof were ready, for there are no walls to speak of. When the

roof was assembled again, plasterers began filling up the spaces between the beams with brown clay mixed with straw, held by a chassis of woven bamboo. The south and east sides were left open, to receive moving walls of eight panels or more. They slide in grooves and can be taken out altogether in summer, changing the house into an airy pavilion.

Carpenters had been working by electric light far into the night to finish the roof. Then one fine afternoon all work came to a standstill. A rough table of boards was erected in the garden, around which everyone gathered to eat buckwheat noodles washed down with saké. Noodles are always eaten on felicitous occasions, as they signify long life. The architect, the foreman, and perhaps the representative of the future house owner were at the head of the table. All were celebrating the fitting of the master beam, and wishing the house a long life.

Above this festive board and the straw-bound barrels of saké, high over everything, was a great bow fixed to both ends of the roof. An arrow was fitted in the stretched cord, ready to be loosed against any evil spirits that might be preying about, envious of the new owner's happiness. From the great beam hung a comb, and a flashing object which I later found out was a mirror. These two

necessary articles of woman's toilette, hanging from the roof, were to influence the future housewife of this residence to stay at home and be a good mother. Then there was the familiar Shinto decoration of curiously cut strips of paper attached to a hemp rope stretched across the threshold, to keep out evil spirits.

From a tall pole flew a long banner of strips of cloth of many hues, an old Chinese symbol for felicity.

Down below, the contractor was exchanging thimble-sized cups with the architect in sign of close friendship, and carpenters were singing songs of their guild, until the last saké barrel was rolled aside and the red lacquer boxes were stacked up and returned to the noodle shop.

Work continued on the roof next day; it was first covered with thin boards, on which all the tiles were laid in separate stacks of six or eight, before they were actually fitted together. The roof was the part of the house to be completed first, thus providing a waterproof shelter for the work that went on below.

The carpenters gradually abandoned the field to cabinet makers and *shoji* fitters. I don't think any locksmiths came, for it was a purely Japanese style house. Wooden bolts would serve the purpose just as well.

Three or four weeks had passed and the finishing touches were being made on a miniature shrine in the garden, no doubt dedicated to Inari, goddess of prosperity. Perhaps the future occupant of this palatial residence was a rich merchant. Then heavy carts drawn by oxen passed our house, laden with trees. Not ordinary trees these, but aristocratic pines and maples and willows trained from their earliest days in graceful bearing in some vast tree nursery outside the city. They were soon replanted with trunks and branches still enveloped in straw. Poles and hemp rope were used to keep them growing artistically in their new environment.

It is extraordinary how easily trees of enormous size are transported from one end of town to the other and made to grow in transplanted soil. One day a lorry came by practically hidden by the outspread foliage, which filled the road and brushed our front door. In the topmost branches perched a gardener, watching out for obstacles overhead, especially for electric wires.

Another day an old stone lantern arrived, which the workmen handled with great care so as not to rub off any of the thick moss acquired after hundreds of years in some temple compound. After this came rocks of great size and curious shape and colour; they were destined for the miniature lake being built in the garden. They must have been

transported from some distant place, as they were of an unusual texture.

The garden probably cost a pretty penny ; yet when the owner moved in, the modest proportions of his household possessions contrasted greatly with the spaciousness of his residence. A van brought to the door a few large wicker baskets, half a dozen enameled charcoal braziers, several tables two feet high and two teakwood chiffoniers. There were no trunks or valises, the largest pieces of luggage being several canvas bags about four feet square. They are the containers used by everybody for carrying bedding, sheets, mattresses and mosquito nets.

\* \* \*

Ah, the freshness of the newly completed house with its shingled walls of clean smelling wood, unpainted and unvarnished ! What simplicity and grace lie in the sloping roof of silver grey tiles with its upturned eaves ! But this freshness is ephemeral. After a year or two, the combined attacks of rain and sun turn the fine grained wood into a dull grey, and it becomes a house like every other one.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Dolls with Souls*

ALTHOUGH we walked silently in stocking feet over the cool mats, having left our shoes at the stage door, yet our arrival seemed to have been expected. In the small dressing room a host of silent actors and actresses were leaning against the wall or reclining in berth-like shelves, staring vacantly as if they had abruptly interrupted a conversation not intended for strangers' ears. A heavy hush permeated the air like the sultriness of that summer morning. Had the vacant seats in the theatre the previous evening reminded them of the insecurity of the artist in these days of moving pictures? Had they been discussing the future of their profession? There was an air of sadness and futility among the entire company, and we felt like intruders, unable to share with sympathy these secrets that were a question of life and death to the puppets of the Bunraku Theatre.

We walked hurriedly past these strangers from Osaka into a still smaller room. It was occupied by a warrior of noble birth, and three ladies, all suspended from stands that supported them upright;



a fourth figure lay crumpled up in a corner alone. A curtain was raised and there entered bowing a little man not much taller than the dolls themselves. He began slipping a dress over the sumptuous robes of a headless figure I had not noticed before. When he had finished, the puppet appeared entirely in white, the color of death. He placed it on a stand so that the robes would hang naturally, folded the wide sleeves over the place where the head should be, and pushed the torso into a corner. Tonight they would play Chushingura, the Tale of the Forty-seven Ronin, or samurai without a master. After avenging the death of their lord who was compelled to disembowel himself as the result of a base plot, they committed *seppuku* one and all themselves, that they might join their lord and serve him in realms beyond.

My companion began sketching the samurai hanging like a young cat caught by the scruff of the neck, with feet in white mitten socks dangling helplessly several inches from the ground. His head was bent forward as if in meditation, and he paid no attention to his swords which had slipped out from under his sash and hung by their cords, swinging almost imperceptibly.

The master artist came in, and changed into a cool unlined kimono held out by his assistant. He seemed pleased to find my friend already at work,

and asked to see the unfinished drawing. He was seventy-three years old, though his smooth, close-shaven face was as rotund as a child's. All his life he had lived among these dolls, which existed many years before he was born. He handled them gently always and almost with affection, and the hem of their sleeves brushed his shining pate as he made them stand up and speak to us. With the simple bending of a hidden finger, he made them show fear or pleasure, respect or surprise. The eyebrows rose noiselessly, or met downward in a fierce scowl, and the mouth smiled or sneered at will.

What consummate artists they were, these animators who could breathe so much life into their puppets that one almost expected them to continue living after the play was over! On the stage they were real and their operators only apparitions. But in this room of man's proportions, among trunks and radiators, with windows looking out on a Tokyo canal, they were dwarfed for the first time, deprived as they were of their miniature houses and gardens on the stage.

A face that had been attracting me for some time was that of a comely young woman, with pale brows made still whiter by her raven hair. A mysterious smile played in the corners of her mouth which seemed always to be on the point of speaking.

Her regular features, half-wistfulness, half melancholy, had the gentle resignation of the warrior's wife.

Seeing my interest, the septuagenarian stood her before him, now more lovely than ever as she assumed a graceful posture, tilting her head in coquettish manner. Then a faint click, and she was a demon incarnate. Black horns stood out above the once serene forehead ; staring, bloodshot eyes replaced the downcast lids, and instead of a mouth a hideous leer cut all across the face, with fangs protruding from among teeth of burnished brass. Another click, and the fiendish apparition disappeared, leaving her as beautiful as before, but with shadows of that terrible face lurking in the corners of her mouth.

The old artist smiled faintly at my amazement. For years he had assisted at all the dramas of his little troupe, yet not even in the supernatural plays where evil spirits roamed the earth had his placid features ever registered the least trace of emotion. He was always silent and alert without appearing so, putting all his feelings into his puppets and watching with slightly upturned face their every movement. To a spectator who was able to tear his eyes off the players long enough to see him, he seemed only an illusion.

The women's faces of the puppets are larger

than those of the men actors, and their roundish eyes set close together shine from faces of pale ivory. The artisan who designed these heads thought only how they would look at a distance. They are the chief wealth of the Bunraku-za, the only remaining puppet theatre in Japan, which owns about 120 of them. Many show signs of wear and undergo constant repair, for there is no one alive today who can make them, the last representative of the craft having died 110 years ago.

The old artist revealed to me some of the arcana of his profession, and I saw how the samurai puppet could wield his sword. His fingers were all articulated, and his hand could bend up or down when hidden strings were operated by a lever at the elbow. For limbs, the puppet has only forearms and legs from the knees down, hanging loosely from cords attached to the torso, which is only a rough wooden framework. Never would one dream what was under those old costumes when the puppets walk on the stage, apparently sound in body and every limb. Women puppets have no feet at all, except those who play in travel parts. The impression of walking is given by moving the hem of their kimono.

Each puppet has two assistants besides the master artist ; one of them moves the left arm and helps the master in various ways, and the other takes

care of both legs. Every movement is made smoothly and silently, in natural harmony, whether the actor is weeping by someone's bedside or parrying a blow with lightning speed. Their movements in moments of intense drama are almost exaggerated to heighten the effect.

Remarkably agile are the operators; the highest one in rank is as active as the youngest apprentice. Wearing cothurni six and sometimes eight inches high, they never make a single false step as they hurry about the stage, following the action of the dolls. In some scenes with lengthy dialogue and little action they may stand between strips of scenery so that they are only visible from the waist up. The puppets are two-thirds life size and many weigh as much as fifteen pounds. The master artist must hold them up with one arm, thrust through the back, one hand busy with the puppet's right arm, and the other around the long neck inside, to move the four levers for eyes, eyebrows and mouth.

Bunraku is a dying art petrified in its traditions. Even if it could adapt itself to modern life, it would lose in doing so the qualities that assured its success for 250 years. All the repertoire of the Bunraku, now also enacted on the Kabuki stage by living players, was first written for the puppet theatres by Japan's greatest playwrights.

Several attempts were made to compete with sound pictures and chorus girls. Modern subjects were chosen, and even new puppets were made. One play was the *Three Human Bombs*, the story of the three heroes during the Sino-Japanese incident who carried an enormous bomb through the enemy lines until it exploded with them. But this departure from tradition brought only momentary success; the movies could do it much better.

Osaka is the last stronghold of the Bunraku puppets. There in Dotombori, the gay theatre quarter of Japan's western industrial city, performances are given the whole year round in the Bunraku-za, founded a hundred years ago. A short annual tour of the provinces is also made, including a month's visit to Tokyo.

The Tokyo theatre in modern style that received the Bunraku players last summer, one of the many in the Shimbashi quarter famous for its expensive tea-houses, was only half-filled on the opening afternoon. The young generation was there; students in black, tight-fitting uniforms; young girls in kimono with motifs of the season, accompanied by their mothers dressed in various degrees of sobriety according to their age. Some of the most famous geisha of Shimbashi adorned the boxes like summer flowers. But the majority of the audience had come on the invitation of

wealthy patrons. They would never have paid the high admission to see puppet shows when there were so many Hollywood pictures at less than half the price.

Among the guests were a number of grey-haired people in formal black kimono which bore in white the family crest; old men with sparse beards, and widows with their hair cut like a man's in the traditional style. These were the real spectators, who had come to enjoy every second of the performance, for only they could understand the half-forgotten language of *gidayu*, the song ballad of the classical theatre.

A sharp clatter of wood on wood, gradually struck faster and faster until it is a quick staccato, then ending as it began, and the curtain rises, revealing a house and garden very much like a scene in Kabuki. The puppet's assistants, similar to those on the Kabuki stage who change the robes of the dancers or carry off properties, are hidden from head to foot in black gauze, making them far from invisible. The chief puppet operator wears no disguise whatever, but is resplendent in a ceremonial robe of gold brocade. There are several puppets on the stage, but the Westerner attending for the first time sees only the master operator and his assistants. He is tempted to believe that if only those men could be made really invisible or be eliminated

altogether, Bunraku might regain its former popularity and even meet with success abroad.

But later in the evening—performances begin in the early afternoon and used to continue till nearly eleven o'clock, with intermission for dinner in the theatre's restaurant—the foreign visitor has already become so accustomed to the men on the stage that he will think no more of them as being in the way. Indeed Bunraku would lose much of its interest without these artists, silent witnesses without expression who seem to communicate life to their dolls, subordinating their own feelings to the passions of the latter. Gradually these are transformed into living actors, whose destinies are governed by the giants behind them.

The recitator, who sits on the extreme right of the stage, near the audience, is as lost in the drama as the operators. He cries, laughs, howls, bursts into fits of sobbing or becomes congested with grief as he impersonates every character, from the avenging lord to the heart-broken lover. He can change from the faltering tones of an old man to the affected simper of a court lady without a pause, as naturally as if he were two persons. A book is open on the low table before him, under a lamp of silk and lacquer, but he hardly troubles to scan it, and there is no prompter. His whole being is on the stage in the hearts of the players. One is no sooner



tempted to watch him than he is irresistibly drawn back to those living dolls. For they and not the recitator seem to be talking; he is more than their mouthpiece, he is the very chords of their emotions. Beside him sits the *samisen* player, similarly attired in the ceremonial dress of sky blue with pointed shoulders of gold brocade, who punctuates his three-stringed instrument with gasps and cries that send fear or amusement into the hearts of the audience and admirably emphasizes the predominant mood.

## CHAPTER V

### *Giants at Play*

THE gay wrestlers' pavilions of red and white bunting and the wooden framework of the criers' towers that once stood on the skyline of old Yedo town remain only in the colour prints of Hiroshigé. They have long ago made way for the immense umbrella-shaped dome of iron by the river Sumida. Gone too is the graceful curve of Two Province Bridge with its complicated trestle-work. Ryogoku Bridge is there in name, to be sure, but even Hiroshigé would never recognize it in the single span of steel that now leaps across the murky Sumida.

An endless stream of motor-cars drives up to the entrance portico outside the amphitheatre. Crowds on foot file by the patrons' offices, a long line of hastily-erected booths. Every wrestler of importance has his patron or manager to take care of the financial side of his career, with a flock of minor officials around him. A good man to know is the patron, if you ever want to see a *sumo* tournament. Seats are usually sold out months in advance, but he nearly always finds you one, provided you are willing to pay.



THE ISLAND SHRINE OF UENO PARK



The patrons' booths are near an old Buddhist temple, erected as a memorial to 107,000 citizens who perished in the great fire of 1657. Open-air wrestling matches were long held in its compound, until the first hall was built in 1909. This building was razed by fire in 1918, to be replaced by the present Kokugikan, the Hall of National Sports. This, Tokyo's largest amphitheatre, whose exterior appearance looks something like Albert Hall, officially seats 12,000, but during the season 20,000 enthusiasts manage to squeeze in.

The wrestlers fight it out twice a year, in January and in May, each season lasting thirteen days without interruption. For thirteen days the normal life of the capital is upset. Crowds block the pavements down town listening to the radio, which is almost entirely devoted to the sport. Wooden tablets bearing the names of the day's winners and losers are hung on specially built racks outside the department stores and extras are shouted every half hour. Footsore drummers roam the streets in groups of three, two of them bearing a huge drum suspended from a pole, which the third man beats rhythmically. The games have been announced in this fashion ever since 1630, when the first tournament in Yedo took place.

The pit is a vast expanse of rice straw mats partitioned off in squares that rise in gradual tiers.

In them sit family parties, groups of business men drinking, and clans of provincial visitors staring wide-eyed, still dressed in the wadded kimono of uniform pattern supplied them by their inn. The wide aisles are packed with standing spectators. The most beautiful geisha of the capital, sipping green tea and smoking long cigarettes, occupy nearly all of the first balcony. Seen from a distance, with their sashes of rich brocade and long butterfly sleeves, they remind one of a vast tapestry.

The ring is on a high platform surmounted by a graceful sloping roof in the temple style. It is supported by tall pillars wrapped in bunting of blue, white, red and black, symbolizing the four seasons and the points of the compass. The sanded ring 14 feet in diameter represents the universe, and the small rice bales that mark it off, the signs of the zodiac. On one side of the ring stand three referees, dressed in the fashion of their predecessors of 300 years ago, in green and purple silks, and tall *eboshi* or pointed hat. Each one carries the symbol of his authority, a black lacquered fan or mace, which when lowered gives the signal to start and when raised indicates the winner.

The two camps, East and West, exist to this day in all their ancient ceremonial. Each one is headed by its champion and two other wrestlers of high rank. The dozen or more immediately be-

low them are of the *maku-no-uchi* class or "within the curtain." Those who are "below the curtain" have still to make a name for themselves. The two camps sit stolidly on opposite sides of the ring below the platform, each man awaiting the call of the referee. They look placid enough, as if unconscious of the excitement they are causing.

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*Sumo* is disconcertingly slow to the newcomer in Japan. His powers of attention are usually exhausted by the time the wrestlers silently spring at each other. After long preliminaries, the fight may be over in an instant. Swaggering ponderously into the ring, the combatants first observe the traditional rites with the absent-mindedness of long practice. They rinse hands and mouth from the water bucket of their camp, then grasp a handful of salt from another pail and sprinkle it on the ring. By this ceremony both ring and wrestlers are purified. It has been observed ever since the 11th century when *sumo* became a part of Shinto religious festivals.

Then squatting on their haunches, they stretch out both arms, palms open, as a sign that everything is above board. They also go through several other movements the meaning of which is obscure even to the Japanese. Ostensibly they are limbering up exercises, as nearly everything is done except stand-

ing on the head. Finally they come face to face, closed fists resting on the ground.

Are they ready at last? Not necessarily. Even after the referee has lowered his fan and stepped aside, one wrestler may shake his head and get up. Or his opponent may make a false start, springing up only to encounter the other still crouching in the ring. For one is not obliged to accept battle if he sees no favourable opening or believes a sudden start inauspicious. In *sumo* the importance of the initial hold is everything. Both men agree to fight only when both are in the mood for it at once. In the past, a wrestler could stubbornly refuse battle all morning if he saw fit, but in these days of speed, the time limit for falling to has been drastically reduced to twelve minutes.

After a false start, both rise with resigned expressions, return to their respective pails for refreshment, and sprinkle another handful of salt on the ring. Then the very same exercises are repeated, before they squat again to glare at each other with fresh determination. This constant repetition of symbolic gestures usually wears out the patience of the tourist, who has not been long enough in the Orient to forget the sense of time. But the Japanese delight in ceremony and never seem to have enough.

When they finally do come to grips, it is often



over in a flash. One toe out of bounds or a hand or knee touching the sand is fatal, and the fight is over just when the tourist may be getting interested. But there are many spectacular throws to be seen, if only one is on the alert at the right time. There exist twelve different ways of throwing, twelve of lifting, and as many for twisting and raising over the head. In the past there were 169 variations of these holds, but they are limited now to 48. The wrestlers grip each other by the black, silk girdle wound many times round the loins and tightly secured. It is their only dress in the ring, and of great importance as most of the holds depend on it.

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The morning bouts begin at seven o'clock, but these are limited to contests between minor wrestlers of "below the curtain" rank. An intermission takes place around noon, when the *yobidashi* or crier chants in high-pitched yet powerful tones the names of the contestants in the afternoon matches. A small boy assists him in the ring by holding up large scrolls on which the names are written in big black ideographs, for the benefit of spectators that have not heard. Although the radio would be much more efficient, the custom of the *yobidashi* persists, for the people enjoy hearing the names sung out in the old theatrical style.

The amphitheatre is nearly encircled by a wide corridor, except where it is interrupted by the dressing rooms of the East and West camps. At noon this passage is more animated than Ginza, the Oxford Street of Tokyo. Crowds storm its restaurants and quick-lunch rooms serving Chinese, Japanese and so-called Western dishes, or swarm in the souvenir shops selling autographed portraits of the favourites and mechanical toys of fighting wrestlers.

Among the people milling like ants stand formidable groups of wrestlers in twos or threes, who quite unwittingly block the way. Others stroll gravely about with well-oiled hair freshly combed in the traditional top-knot visible high above the heads of ordinary citizens. Young aspirants with unkempt hair, and wearing thin cotton kimono, follow at their heels. These neophytes begin their career in the ring by acting as servants to the champions.

Police are soon everywhere in droves, hoping that their presence will be enough to restrain the wild enthusiasm of afternoon spectators. Late comers arrive now in intermittent streams, whole families together, with the wife carrying the youngest child on her back. I once saw a man carrying his grandmother. Women like *sumo* as much as men, and it is not merely to show their beautiful coiffure that geisha fill the balcony every day of the tournament.

So much confusion reigns in the wrestlers' sanctum before the afternoon matches that an outsider could easily walk in without being noticed. In the common dressing room covered with a floor of thick rice mats sit those mountains of flesh and muscle the *o-sumo-san*, the Honourable Mr. Wrestlers, dwarfing patrons, journalists and autograph seekers. Many are having their hair oiled and combed by the professional wrestler's barber. The last fighters of the morning are returning from the ring. The young attendants help them off with the long girdle, by seizing one end and gathering it in as the wearer spins around to unwind himself. Then he leaps into an enormous wooden vat in the bathroom, causing a minor flood. There is nothing like a dip in water of 120 degrees to relax between matches.

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Surprisingly sociable they are, even the champions, in spite of their reputation of stupidity and arrogance. They are rather slow-witted, but willingly answer all kinds of questions as to the secret of their strength and great stature. Wrestlers generally eat five to six times as much as the average person, but follow no particular diet. Grand champion Futabayama, "Budding Mountain," at the height of his career, admitted he slept long, and

only trained two or three hours daily. He has a fine physique at 28 years of age, like few other wrestlers. With age they invariably lose their well-balanced proportions, as weight is the important thing. Tamanishiki, "Jeweled Brocade," who won the annual tournaments seven times, had a triple chin and was famous for his vast belly. When he was operated on for appendicitis, ordinary surgical tools were useless. It was like cutting through whale meat.

This abnormal development of the abdominal region, far from being a drawback in *sumo*, is on the contrary greatly encouraged. In the East the stomach is regarded not only as the seat of the affections, like the heart is with us, but as that of power. The wrestler's protruding belly also serves as a lever for throwing his opponent, besides acting as a formidable battering-ram.

For a long time Futabayama reigned supreme, and *sumo* fans were becoming used to his victories. No rival seemed serious enough to alter the situation. But *sumo*, though it appears slow to some, is full of surprises. None was more unexpected than the downfall of the most popular man in the Empire, on the eve of his 70th consecutive victory. A dark horse upset the champion by grabbing him by the left leg—he is weak in the legs, and a few days later Futabayama went down again.

Futabayama lay in the ring for the first time in five seasons. The arena became a madhouse. Seat cushions, bottles, hats, ash trays were hurled down in the pit and on the heads of ring-side spectators, retired wrestlers and judges for the most part, who are used to this sort of thing. The police entered the box of the much-harassed radio announcer, and vainly pleaded for calm.

After four false starts, Futabayama and Ryogoku named after the bridge nearby came to grips. Ryogoku obtained an advantageous hold on his mighty assailant's girdle, but he was being slowly pushed to the edge of the ring. Then an astounding thing happened: Ryogoku's powerful arms went into action, his belly became a lever, and in a twinkling the 180-pound champion of champions went over his shoulder.

Three life-size portraits of Futabayama, who held the title three years, hang high up in the vast dome-shaped roof among the other pictures of past champions. Thirty-five form a complete circle in the bluish haze, and a second circle of them is beginning, gazing down on their successors in the ring. They represent a half a century of Japan's national sport.

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Members of the Imperial Family watch the af-

ternoon matches from the Imperial box with its red plush thrones and curtains on the first balcony level. The nobility rarely fails to attend a tournament, nor is this a departure from tradition. According to Japanese historians, the first *sumo* match ever recorded took place in the presence of an emperor in 23 B. C., when a champion from wild Izumo province challenged another from Yamato, the land where the first emperors settled. Wrestling was a court function during Kyoto's palmy days, and later in Yedo the shoguns became patrons of the sport. Count Kuroda revived its popularity in the early 19th century, and Prince Iyesato Tokugawa, a descendant of the shogun, has always been an ardent fan. His familiar figure was missed in the last tournaments, however, as he is no longer strong enough to sit for long hours in the chilly amphitheatre watching his favourite sport.

He will surely miss that splendid ceremony known as the *dohyo-iri*, "entering the ring," which the Japanese enjoys as much as the matches themselves. This grand spectacle takes place every afternoon, when the wrestlers of the East camp push their way down the crowded aisles, all of them fighters "within the curtain." These 300-pound giants, over six feet high, form a circle in the ring under the dazzling lights, with the referee in their midst. Their skirts of gold braid glitter and their flesh

ripples as they outstretch arms, clap thrice and stamp as many times with either foot. After all the symbolic movements have been faithfully executed in an atmosphere of solemnity, they walk off the ring with slow, majestic gait. Their champion comes up afterward, preceded by a wrestler of high rank, while another brings up the rear, bearing a sword with hilt high in the air. The champion of the East camp wears around his enormous girth a woven cordon of white rope, from which depend the curiously cut papers representing offerings of purification to the Shinto deities. It is the belt of honour which only the Champion of Champions is entitled to wear.

The amphitheatre fairly vibrates with applause when the champion steps up, ponderous yet well-poised, and begins the ritual gestures with an air of great dignity. His chin lies in folds on his neck, and his chest almost laps over on to his stomach encircled by the white cordon. It is as tight as a drum, like some magnificent pudding.

The members of the West camp appear in like manner to repeat the ceremony before walking off. Finally both camps settle on their respective sides below the ring, ready to answer the call of the referee to fight upon the sanded field.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Tokyo Waterfront*

IN Japan anyone may enjoy sailing in graceful sloop or modest dinghy according to his means. Bay and sea, lake and estuary, all may be found within easy reach of the capital. In some places, the scenery is typically Japanese, in others one sails among factories and reclaimed land. But in a sport like sailing, scenery is secondary.

Whenever we were tired of the city and its noise, and had an afternoon free, we would take a bus to Shibaura. Ten minutes from the Ginza and we were on Tokyo Bay with its crowded shipping. There among canals, cranes and railway sidings stands a ramshackle boat-house with rambling balcony overlooking the bay. Its amiable commodore is usually found puttering around old boats in the miniature yard behind the club. From him you will soon learn of the many problems of sailing in these well-frequented waters. He will tell you what canals you are to follow and what bridges to go under in order to find your way out of the maze of inland waterways into the open bay. The explanation will be accompanied with so much detail and



complicated maps traced on the ground that you will end up by knowing less than before he started.

There is the tide, a problem in itself. When it is out, you risk running aground in the sluggish canal; when it is in, your mast won't clear the bridges and must be lowered. When the winds are contrary, or don't blow at all, you can spend the afternoon rowing out. But sometimes the commodore will start the two-cylinder engine of his light native skiff and tow you out in five minutes.

"Remember the channel!" he would warn us again and again as he let us loose in the bay. "You can cross it between any of those sets of tall posts, but don't try it anywhere else or you'll run into the barrage just under water."

There were no restrictions, although we sailed in a busy bay in wartime. We often saw the water police racing back and forth in their trim craft. They would leave us bobbing up and down in their wake, but never questioned us.

When the beginner has learned how to use the wind in getting out of canals and passing under bridges into Tokyo Bay, he is ready for further tests. There are islands to aim at and sail between with well-planned tacking. There are also the tide and the river current to be taken into account. Nowhere else so near Tokyo is one able to experience in such a restricted area the many problems that a yachtsman

encounters sooner or later. Calms and squalls and changeable winds play about these artificial islands, large grassy forts surrounded by massive walls like those of the Imperial Palace.

There are five of them in all, stretching across the entrance to Tokyo harbour. They were hastily built at the time of the arrival of Commodore Perry's "Black Ships" at Uraga in 1853. So scarce were cannon in that critical period that temple bells were taken from their towers and placed on the islands' battlements, as a last stand against possible attack. However, as a treaty of friendship and commerce was concluded before the American ships reached Yedo, these bells were never obliged to play the part of cannon.

So with abandoned defences the islands stand to this day, useless monuments to the short-sightedness of the Tokugawas. Two of the forts later found themselves on either side of a channel, and thus acquired some importance. On each one are now established a small light-house and signal station for speaking the numerous ships steaming in and out of Shibaura every hour of the day.

Here is no azure sea or green coastline, but quays and smoke and the animation of shipping. Besides, one has little leisure in which to admire scenery. Those inclined to reverie might find themselves rudely awakened by the maledictions of

some tug pilot bearing down from an unexpected quarter. A sail boat, of course, has the right of way over steamers, as it cannot always change its course as quickly as the latter. But this does not mean that one may sail right in the path of a tug-boat towing a train of barges. When the yachtsman spies one of them emerging from some hidden canal, it behooves him to go about without delay.

If he knew that one blast from the oncoming tug was ship language for, "I am directing my course to starboard" and two blasts, "I am directing my course to port," he might be saved some anxiety. But a steamship will not change her course if there is any risk of running aground.

Crossing the channel may be quite an adventure if the wind fails when one is half way across, with four or five vessels bearing down from various points. But once on the other side the skipper may relax for the first time since he sailed out of Shibaura. No ship can follow him in those shallow waters with choppy waves. Behind gradually rises Tokyo's skyline, with the Diet building, the dome of the Nikolaido and the tower of St. Luke's Hospital above the rest of the city. Ahead of him may be seen, very faintly, the outline of the Chiba coast opposite.

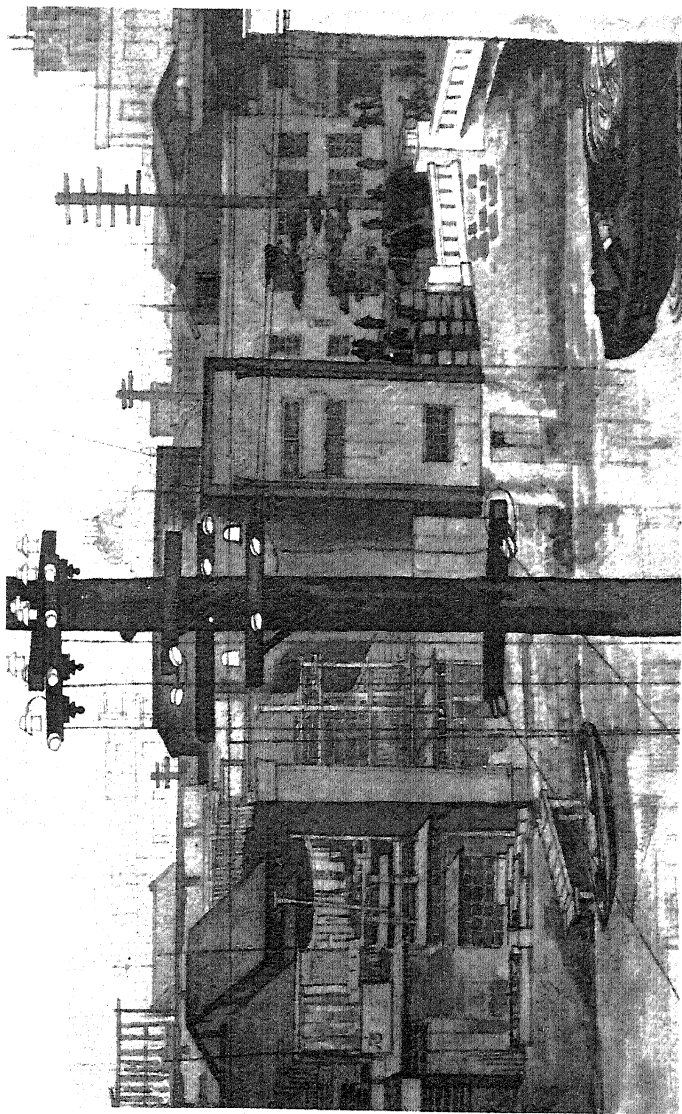
There is no sign of life on this wide expanse of grey waters except an occasional low-flying gull

fishing for his dinner. Countless dead trees stand out everywhere, reminding one of a blighted forest in some volcanic lake. But they didn't grow up there, but were planted like poles, with their branches still on, to form vast blocks intersected by imaginary canals. For on this sea on which one now sails, buildings will stand some day. It is part of a vast reclamation project that has been going on for three hundred years, ever since Yedo became the capital of the Empire. In earlier days one could sail almost under the wall of the Palace, where now rise modern buildings along some of Tokyo's finest boulevards. And the waters are still receding before the onslaught of the land.

\*       \*       \*

Like Paris, Tokyo is a busy port, although one might not think of either a port city. Like those in the French capital, Tokyo's canals worm their way between crowded houses in complicated ramifications, and giant barges from the bay come up river and into the very heart of the city. Life is slow on the canals. In early morning when the murky waters are gently ruffled by the wind, the sun converts them into rivers of diamonds. Here and there are barges being unloaded of coal or sand, the men crossing and recrossing the cat-walk with flat baskets suspended from poles on their shoulders.

CANAL SCENE





When the vast hull is empty, mother scrubs the deck, tidies up the cabin and lastly sits down on the after-deck with a bucket of hot water to wash her hair. Their home is a small hold with matted floor, and no portholes. Yet it is home, and even the baby leaves his *geta* outside before disappearing down the hatch. Sometimes a clumsy converted fishing boat goes by, making a tempest in the canal, her one-cylinder engine pounding sonorously under the bridges. When she is empty and her decks are high, the pilot will try to take her down at low tide, in order to pass under these bridges and the propeller turns the whole canal black, often getting stuck in the mud. Then must men strain at long poles all morning to move her a few yards. Or a leisurely barge will glide silently by, the man walking the whole length of narrow deck leaning with all his weight on the bamboo pole. The wife takes the helm; dressed in short blouse and tight-fitting trousers, she looks just like her man, except for baby on her back.

Camped on the edge of these canals are people who make a living by selling what others find useless. Like their brothers of the famed Flea Market under the walls of Paris, they salvage everything that has been thrown away. Their homes are their two-wheeled carts filled with treasures of doubtful origin. At night they sleep in them, bur-

rowing deep in the warm paper. When it rains or snows, they place their carts so as to form a square, and rig up an old tarpaulin over them. In the centre of this improvised courtyard a small fire is kept going most of the night, and even the smoke is used for heating purposes. On gray mornings it thaws out the occupants of the carts, but on sunny days a few thin mats are laid out for mother and the children. Soon father and son prepare for the morning foraging in the city's back streets. They dress heavily in as many old clothes as they can get into, and wrap towels round the head to keep their ears warm. Battered straw hats complete their attire.

After a bowl of steaming water sometimes flavoured with a pinch of tea, they slip deep straw baskets on their shoulders and are off. Grandfather, who is almost fat and has a beard to keep his face warm, does not participate in these expeditions. On sunny mornings he is happier than most kings. Then he will sit in a cart well filled with paper, and avidly read every bit of newspaper he can find around him.

Mother rarely carries baskets on her back, as baby occupies that place most of the time. Wrapped up tight in a shawl, he only leaves his place of safety when mother is tired, and then he is transferred to the back of his sister, age seven or thereabouts. The return of the men is always an



exciting moment for these two, and they watch the baskets being emptied with keen interest, to see what may have been found in the way of toys. Father once brought back a perfectly good ball of red and gold; only she had to hit it very hard to make it bounce. But she could soon do most difficult things with it.

At lunch time, the best mat is shaken out and spread before the fire for the children, who first slip off their *geta* and place them side by side on the edge. Papa nearly always has some surprise for dinner; once he brought back a mandarine that was hardly spoiled at all, and the best slices went to his youngest boy.

\*       \*       \*

If you want to rediscover the scenes and meet the people that looked out at you from the old colour prints on your wall at home, and see a little of that bustling life of Yedo days so faithfully pictured by Hiroshigé, you must go to Tsukiji, that flat stretch of reclaimed land between the Ginza and the river Sumida. There among theatres and shipyards, tea houses and temples, smilingly jostle fishmonger and bean curd vendor, priest and peddler of gold fish, all familiar subjects of Hiroshigé's brush.

At the first sign of spring the entire quarter at the head of the Sumida throws open wide its doors

and moves everything out into the streets, buying, selling, loading, packing, eating and cooking in the midst of bicycles, huge trucks, and hand carts rattling over the cobblestones. Tsukiji provides for the mouth of Tokyo, and to its vast fish market come buyers from all over the capital. The principal canals leading up to the markets are choked with narrow craft tied up in bunches of three and four that arrive each morning laden with country produce from across the bay. Behind them twenty-four stately buildings of glass and concrete describe an arc nearly half a mile long, bordering the river. It is the wholesale market, a sight undreamed-of by the creator of the 100 scenes of Yedo, but which he would have surely included had they existed in his time.

Two bridges more than a hundred years old still cross the canal, built in exactly the same way as the first ones in Yedo. Grass and weeds grow in the cracks, the corner posts are rotting away, and the name on one, *Uogashi-bashi*, "Fishmarket Bridge" is almost illegible. It is closed to bicycles, and an automobile would give the other the *coup de grâce*.

*Uogashi-bashi* is lined on both sides by peddlers sitting among their wares spread on the planks, and one walks past mountains of *geta*, ink stones and tablets of solid ink, along with modern rubber writ-

ing "brushes," stacks of underwear, piles of baskets, rows of potted plants and dwarfed trees, and rubber boots. Everybody in Tsukiji connected with fish wears these: short ones reaching to the calves, others to the knees, and still others to the hips. Short waterproof coats with wide sleeves are worn with them. The boots are popular not only with men and boys, but women as well. Hiroshigé would have probably been delighted to sketch fish-mongers' wives or sweethearts, with monumental coiffure of jet black, in bright kimono and *haori*, the short overgarment, and wearing a pair of shiny black rubber boots. There is nothing incongruous about this; Japanese are above all practical, and a fish market is no place for *geta* and white *tabi*. Rubber boots are made in Japan, they are Japanese, and their name is *gomu-gutsu*.

\* \* \*

The maid in the crowded *tempura* restaurant at a stone's throw from Honganji temple in Indian style also wore boots. We wished we had some too, for she was very liberal with the water, which without warning she would throw over the floor in bucketfuls to clear it up a little. But here the fish is fresh. The *tempura* shop is a low ceilinged shack of glass and corrugated iron, in a narrow street lined with one-storeyed shops, a street so narrow that even

cyclists cannot wriggle through. For piled high on both sides are vegetables in profusion, kitchen ware, fruit, crockery, and dried bonito. Opposite us an old woman in her cake shop open to the winds, is busy making thick waffles which she fills with red beans, and next door an agile youth is constantly turning over rice crackers on a grill till they are a golden brown.

Fishermen and fishmongers are good judges of fish, whether raw or fried, and here they flock in droves and do not always find a seat. For like most establishments of the kind that have a reputation for good food, its clientèle is larger than its accommodations. Although it is not quite noon, we find the narrow, low ceilinged room already crowded and smoky. The stone floor has just been washed, but it smells of fish. A continuous shelf runs along the walls in lieu of tables, and the room is occupied by the chef, long chopsticks in hand, behind a giant cauldron of boiling oil. The counter near him is the choice spot for gastronomes, who receive their still sizzling fish practically from caldron to rice-bowl from the chopsticks of the chef himself.

Waiters are running about with long metal chopsticks on which several fried shrimps are impaled while *tempura* lovers constantly call out their order, and receive the shrimp over the shoulder,

skilfully dropped in their plates. These epicures want their fish hot, and rarely order more than one at a time. A quieter spot is the platform covered with mats in the back of the room, where one may sit on cushions before low tables. There you will be safe from the occasional showers of hot oil that fly out of the great iron vessel in which your fish is being fried, and from the generous buckets of water with which the maid clears the floor of *débris*.

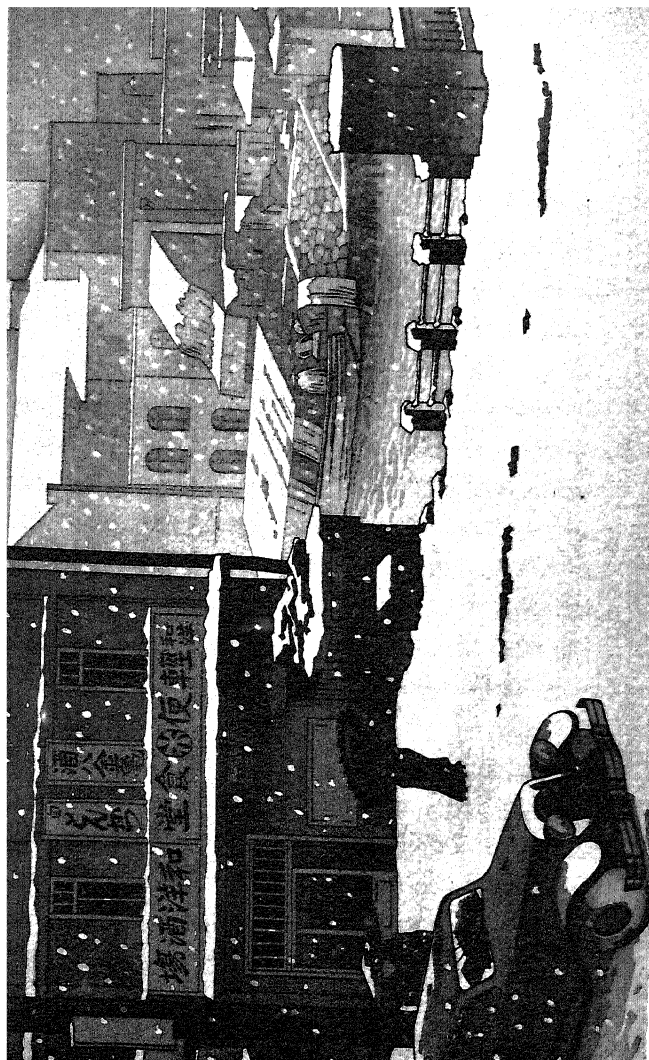
Suddenly invaders from the nearby Ginza, clerks and office people in ready-made clothes, make a descent on the humble shop. They seem to be gastronomes all of them, and old customers, for they do not care where they sit, as long as they are served hot. As the shop is already overcrowded, we expect to see them leave crest-fallen. Not so, the master barks a few brief orders to his boys who scurry about busily, fetching boards and boxes, while he smiles encouragingly at the honourable patrons and promises them plenty of room in no time. They are soon led out to a rickety shed adjoining the main room, and there sit with great unconcern on barrels around their improvised table in the cold.

What do they eat, these worshippers of *tempura*? The people of Tsukiji have an established preference from which they rarely depart, but the intruders from down town offices often go through

the entire list of the day's specialities. These are written on narrow wooden tablets hanging from hooks over the proprietor's head. When one kind is sold out, he merely reaches up and unhooks the tablet bearing the name of the too popular fish. At the noon hour there are about fifteen names posted, among them several kinds of shrimp, shell fish and members of the eel family. *Kai-bashira*, the tender ligament of a certain large sea-shell, is one of the favourites.

I hear that the great cauldron never becomes entirely empty; the old oil is never thrown away, but new oil is added now and then. So the oil in which your shrimp is plunged, covered from head to tail in his protective coat of flour batter, may be quite venerable, but it won't hurt you. Especially if you can consume even a third as much grated horse radish in soy bean sauce as these fishmongers do, in which they dip their fish. The cauldron means everything to the *tempura* man; it is his heritage, his most prized possession, the mainstay of his trade. It may have been handed down from father to son through many generations, and it is the first thing he tries to save in a fire or earthquake.

So if you forget the buckets of water, the flying oil, the cries and the rushing waiters, and not make computations on the possible age of the oil or the probabilities of an earthquake, you can only



SNOW SCENE, TSUKIJI





agree that there never was a more tender morsel than a shrimp of Tsukiji in his flaky golden crust.

\* \* \*

Ten minutes east of the Ginza with its jazz and subways and department stores lies a quiet island village that is now a part of Tokyo. It is the smallest of the islands at the head of the river Sumida, forming the nucleus of the great symmetrical areas of reclaimed land nearby. No bridges connect Tsukuda-jima with the mainland: one is ferried across by a low ceilinged barge towed by a leisurely tug. I find it filled with fishermen and labourers who live on the island; I am the only visitor. No toll is collected by the uniformed helmsman who also coils the rope round the landing post and sees that not more bicycles than the deck will hold are got aboard. The bicycle is the sole means of transportation on the island.

My friend is on the landing pier, among the crowd of mothers and daughters awaiting the homecoming of their men. He lives on the island, taking the ferry every day, and enjoys fresh fish, low rent and tranquillity. The island is the home of *tsukuda-ni*, the different kinds of small fish preserved in *shoyu*, well known in Tokyo as a delicacy originated by the convicts of Tsukuda-jima. For it was a place of exile in Tokugawa times. A

prison fortress stood there and convicts were put to work deepening the river and reclaiming land that now are islands seven feet above the sea level.

What a pleasant change from the roar of traffic on the Ginza is this little island, with its pigeons cooing in the temple compound! We walk up the single street, lined by most of the shops: an ice-cream parlour, two saké shops, and a barber shop are some of the most imposing ones. The road goes on through the centre of the island, over a little bridge crossing an inner channel for boats, where a solitary representative of the law yawns in his box for want of excitement.

"There are no convicts here today," explains my friend. "However, the people here are not from Tokyo, at least not many. Most of them are descendants of thirty-three fishermen from a small port near Osaka." I learn that they had been summoned in 1590 by the Shogun to emigrate and settle on this island. It was at the time he was made lord over the territory which is now Tokyo and its environs.

Along the quay several fishermen are basking in the thin sunlight of this March afternoon. Two old fellows, already grey, but with muscular features, are hard at a game of chess on a bench. Others look over their nets, blackened by long use and the slime of weed-infested waters. Some of

them have been run up by pulleys on the end of poles to dry, where they hang in stately sweeps like the funeral crêpe draping some old cathedral.

Their houses along the waterfront are quite unlike any I have seen in Tokyo. They are massively built to resist the frequent storms that sweep up the river, and the second storey is really a garret. Some are almost hidden behind the quay, five or six feet below the street level, and one could easily climb on to the low roofs, freshly painted with tar. A sky-light or two with a sliding storm shutter are the only indications of a second storey, and there are no platforms for drying clothes such as are found on Tokyo's roofs.

My host's wife brought up an enormous platter of *sushi*, that delicacy of specially seasoned rice balls covered with slices of red, raw fish. The fish, I learned, had just been caught that morning. It was very peaceful in his second storey with a view over the house tops. A nearby temple bell boomed, and scores of pigeons rose from surrounding roofs, describing large circles. Two alighted on our window sill, and my host threw them a few grains of rice. The bell strikes at five every morning and the fishermen rise at four-thirty so as to be on foot when it sounds.

"They still cling to their old customs," said my host. "But their headman died last year, and

for the first time they have no one to take his place. He used to settle all disputes, making them assemble to draw lots for their respective fishing areas. So that until lately, the policeman didn't have much to do."

For the past three hundred years, these families of fishermen, who had brought with them their tutelary gods when they emigrated, never married outsiders, as they believed their gods were opposed to it. But today, although many own their homes and boats, it seems that this tradition has been broken for economic reasons.

On our way back to the ferry landing, we went by a *yose* or story-teller's hall, which is also like a vaudeville; there for ten sen one may pass many hours sitting on the mats, hearing punsters and watching acrobats.

"That is the fishermen's chief amusement," remarked my friend. "And the cheapest," he added as we came in sight of the saké dealer's.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Life on the Pavements*

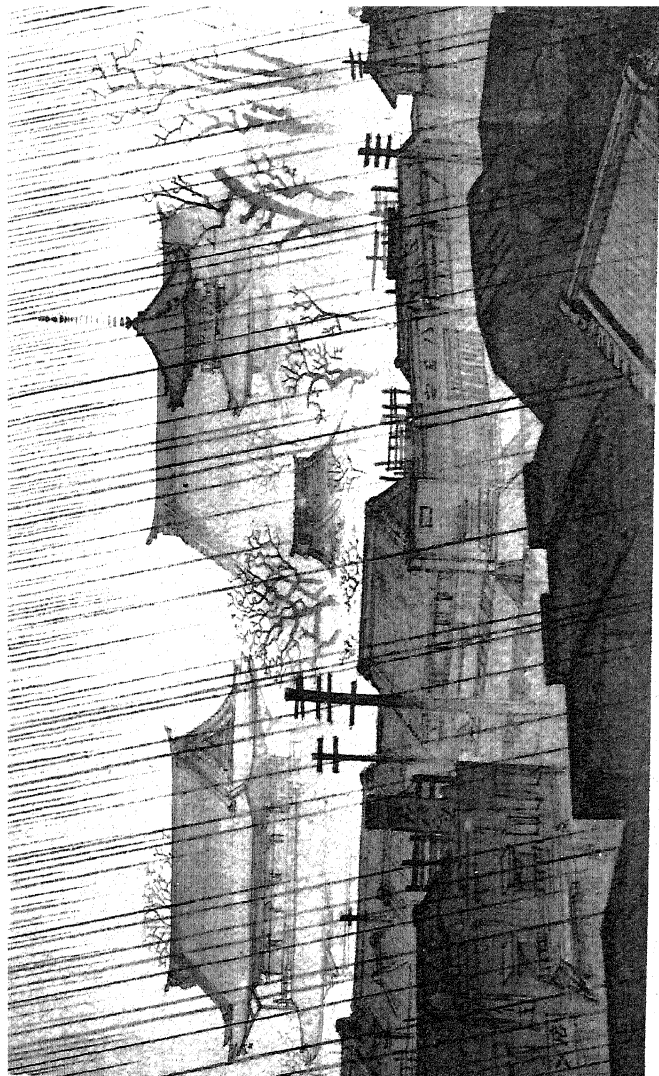
A temperate climate and a characteristic of Japanese houses to shed their paper walls makes it easy to study the people at work and play. In warm weather one can learn a great deal by merely walking through the streets of the capital. Shops and houses are open to the winds, and one can get a good view of what is going on inside. Whenever the weather permits, artisans of all kinds use the pavement as their workshop. Tokyo streets in summer are one continuous stage of ever-changing scenes.

There is the carpenter, that most famous of all artisans, who sits on the floor of his shop almost level with the pavement, and open to every breeze. He works sitting down, and instead of a table uses only a thick beam lying on the ground. His tools are few and simple, and he has no use for nails. One shop specializes in delicate *shoji* frames, or sliding doors, of sweet smelling wood; another in bath-tubs of white pine, oval and square, bound with copper rings. In Tansu-machi or Cabinet Quarter are entire streets lined with cabinet makers'

shops; they make the tall chiffoniers of teakwood for Japanese homes, moth and moisture proof. It is an old profession.

A certain street in Asakusa near the docks along the river Sumida shows every stage of the manufacturing of *geta*. One can see the article from start to finish, in orderly progression, if one begins at the right end of the street. First, there are large shops filled with blocks of white pine or cypress, neatly stacked and forming a barricade on the pavement. A few doors farther on, many of the same blocks are seen, but *geta* makers are busily rounding off the corners and piercing three holes in each block, one at the end and two on each side. The next shop gives the explanation of the holes: hanging from the ceiling and all over the façade are woven cords of white cotton, and others already enveloped in their coloured silk jackets. These are the thongs for the *geta*, and this shop fits them on. Finally at the end of the *geta* street, mountains of the finished articles are piled up on the edge of the kerb.

If *tatami* hold any secrets from you, only walk down any street in spring, when the annual house-cleaning takes place. This old custom of Tokugawa days is enforced more strictly than ever: everything is taken out of the house at fixed dates twice a year, floor matting included. Doors and *shoji* are lifted out: one does everything but pull the house apart.



THE TEMPLE OF KWANNON IN ASAKUSA





Then you will see how many things can go into a Japanese house, and not wonder at the vast size of the closets. At about this time *tatami* makers are busy covering the understructure of rice straw two inches thick with a new surface, the blue-green cover of finely woven rushes, that the sun gradually changes to rich shades of brown and gold. Then the pavement becomes the most convenient place to work on these mats six feet by three, and in residential districts the road is even better.

Down town pavements are often decorated with gigantic easels twelve feet high with legs wound with white and red ribbon supporting luxuriant wreaths of artificial flowers. They are so tall that one can walk under them as they bridge the pavements. Some have paper storks in the middle of the wreath. These stand outside a shop that is opening for business, as congratulatory wishes on the part of friends. And they act as messages of condolence when a shop has been gutted out by fire, at the same time advertising the neighbouring stores that presented them, these latter not having forgotten to append their names to long ribbands.

Shops are always putting up new signs, and the sign painter who confines his activities indoors during the wet weather, doesn't hesitate to use the more spacious pavement at other times. He always draws a respectful crowd when he writes Chinese charac-

ters on vertical sign-boards. To do this he squats on a kind of bridge-platform, through which he pushes the long sign as he writes, his hand directly over each character, with the brush perpendicular to the paper, in the correct form. The idler in Tokyo can learn calligraphy free of charge during the sign-painting season.

\* \* \*

In summer it is the greatest pleasure for Tokyoites to fare forth in the evening in some crowded street where they are freely entertained by a night fair. In Shinjuku, once a town of its own and now a part of Tokyo more animated than the Ginza, the high street is nearly impassable on these occasions. Two constant streams of humanity push along between shop windows and the night booths lining the kerb from dusk until after eleven, men in *yukata* with a fan stuck in their sash like a sword, women with their hair loosely flowing down the back returning from the bath with soap and towel in an aluminum basket, old people with kimono tucked into their sash above the knees to catch any wandering breeze; students with wide sleeves rolled up to the shoulder. Suddenly three or four bubbles sail over the crowd out into the street where they come to grief with a tramway. Next to a booth exhibiting a mountain of tooth brushes in cellophane

wrappers is the source of the soap bubbles, a man demonstrating his clay pipes to an attentive gathering of maids and children. Nearby is a stall of racks filled with second hand shoes shining as if they had been lacquered; shoes of all periods, from high galoshes to pumps, and shoes with buttons to laced high-lows. As if to counteract the smell of leather, one is struck by a powerful scent, and a young man has just given you a free spray of "Exotic Night" from the next booth. Further on more people are engrossed watching the efforts of a man demonstrating a toy. One blows through a pipe and a celluloid ball on its end rises, the object being to make it catch on a hook hanging from a kind of gibbet directly over the pipe. Next to a booth selling electrical fixtures, with every lamp lit, is the statuary man whose shop consists of three or four shelves on which stand plaster casts of Venus de Milo, not far from Hotei-sama the pot-bellied god of luck. Admiral Togo's bust has as its neighbour the death mask of Napoleon. Another booth presumably aims to sell old records, Japanese folk songs and forgotten waltzes of the early twentieth century, and indeed there are many people enjoying the music played on a primitive phonograph, but they see no necessity for buying.

As one nears the end of the fair street, booths give way to portable tables, and tables to matting

on the pavement. On one corner is a man who writes your name with brush and good black ink on a thick tablet to place on your gate pillar. He draws most respectful crowds of students and old men, who watch him write with assurance and grace. And finally in the shadows a pale figure in black is seen behind a kind of table on which rests the familiar white lantern with the three horizontal lines. He is the fortune teller, versed in the science of divination by drawing sticks, and palmistry also for those who prefer it.

\* \* \*

But Shinjuku is not all night fairs. The quarter is distinguishable a long way off by its several eight-storeyed department stores and movie houses, standing like lonely giants among the low shops nestling beneath their walls. Off the main street, behind these towering edifices of steel and concrete, lies a quarter of tea-houses, cafés and restaurants of impermanent, unpainted wood in the native style, exceedingly frail in contrast. Modest "10 sen standbars," tiny *sushi* shops and foreign style "salons" follow side by side down narrow alleys, and the music of geisha airs played on the gramophone mingle with the singing of maid servants going about their work.

Some of the names of these bars and tea rooms

would give nostalgia to the most hardened Frenchman: "Mon Paris," "Necepas?" a Japanese short-cut for "N'est-ce pas?," "Elysée" and "Mon Parnasse"; but kimonoed maids at the doorstep crying "Irasshai-mase!" dispel all illusions. Some places are quite stylish, such as the "Pâtisserie Française" with its tall curtained windows revealing the tri-cornered caps of students in friendly *tête-à-tête*. Down a narrow flag-stoned path are tea-rooms with Spanish and South American names: "Carioca," "Bolero," "Rio" and "Argentina," with façades of white stucco and iron balconies. Another bar advertises the drinks in vogue of every European country, for only ten sen a glass. Here Japanese with small incomes can make a world tour in a night.

Between numerous western style eating houses tempting the passer-by with window exhibitions of fried prawns, Russian salads and beefsteak—all imitation food that looks better than the real thing inside—stands the Moulin Rouge, a vaudeville show. Atop the Greek colonnade perches a revolving red wind-mill, and a taxi-stand forms a line down the centre of the street, as in distant Montmartre. Again the Frenchman will be tempted to enter, but again will he be disappointed unless he can understand the Japanese in the modern plays and sketches that make up most of the programme,

save for a few appearances of chorus girls.

East and West meet without much disharmony in the moving picture houses. The Adventures of Alice or Tarzan of the Apes is run at the same time as The Story of the Forty-Seven Ronin, or a modern Japanese picture is presented after The Unfinished Symphony. It is a very balanced diet that patrons are given. The evening may start off with a bang and end up in tears, going through the gamut of the emotions. The effects of a Hollywood production of jazz and syncopation will be rounded off later by an all-Japanese film almost prosaic in contrast. The first acts as a tonic, the second as a sedative. What is omitted in American films Japanese pictures supply: pathos, sentiment, as expressed by ordinary people. Filial piety, loyalty, and other Oriental virtues carry the story. No action, or very little, but mostly emotion. It may appear illogical, and without a plan, but it is true to life. One usually won't know until the very last scene how it will end.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Hub of the Empire*

IN the heart of the metropolis, within view of the Imperial Palace's grey walls and white watch-towers stands Tokyo Station, a long brick building with a steep roof of slate. Being in the *Bahnhof* style of the late 19th century, its red walls stand out among the more modern blocks of offices surrounding the vast square. When it was built, that part of Tokyo was still a devastated area. Opposition was strong then against erecting such an enormous pile; today people complain that it is too small.

At nine in the morning and again at five in the afternoon, a continuous dark stream of office workers, enlivened here and there by girl typists in kimono, pour through its many wickets. Among the fleets of taxis, buses and tramcars that fill the square, five or six frail rikisha are lined up bravely under the station's broad roof, with nickel spokes and fenders gleaming. Their runners in tight-fitting white jackets and basin shaped hats still hopefully await customers.

The average Japanese travels a great deal, and Tokyo Station is almost never at rest. New customs

have even grown up during the short fifty years since railways were first introduced, and they are now part of the life of the people. Two that have come to stay are seeing-off and welcoming-home parties. One or the other may be in progress on the platforms of Tokyo Station at almost any time of day or night.

There are many kinds of "seeing-off," from the quiet family party to the rousing send-off of a man to the front. But the most frequent and apparently not the most enjoyable are the official parties.

"Our custom of formal send-offs," confessed a Japanese official, "is really exaggerated at times, and I am beginning to be quite bored with it all. We just had our second one in three days, and each time our entire staff of 200 went to the station."

It is not improbable that these parties are also a little tedious to the person who is leaving, when there are so many people to bow to. For etiquette requires him to return anyone's bow, whether he knows him or not. When an important official is departing, the station is black with people in frock coats. Formal Japanese dress is also worn, the grey *hakama* or divided skirt and black *haori* with the family crest on the back and sleeves. But among all this official black are sometimes touches of colour, perhaps a little girl in brilliant ceremonial kimono



and *obi* of brocade, who walks timidly up to the gentleman in tails and presents him with a bouquet.

Finally the station master himself bows and opens the door to the observation car platform, a hint for the traveller to make his last bows and board the train. The whistle blows, someone cries quickly: "Mr. So-and-So Banzai!" and following the lead, three lusty "Banzai!" are given in unison by everyone there.

Some send-offs are less formal. Once a group of Japanese wrestlers, in thin cotton kimono and their hair done up in the traditional top-knot, was seen on the platform, towering over the rest of the crowd. The departing man stood calmly on the car step, his powerful physique ill-concealed under a morning coat. He was the president of a wrestling club.

When a soldier leaves for the front, there are flags and banners flying, and sometimes a band playing. Besides the man's relatives, the platform is crowded with members of the young men's associations in various shades of khaki, and women in white or green aprons of patriotic societies. The conscript in his brand new uniform with a red band round the shoulder, stands in a circle formed by his friends. Waving paper flags to beat the measure, they sing many verses of some favourite march until the train pulls out.

The custom of welcoming home is observed with equal enthusiasm. I took part in a reception for a Japanese opera singer returning from Paris. One doesn't go up on the platform to meet the home-comer, but waits downstairs behind the wicket in the great domed lobby. I was wending my way through the crowd when someone grasped me by the arm.

"You are welcoming the return of Miss H?" asked a man in morning coat. I nodded. "Then please join our party, we are also waiting for her." He led me to a group of similarly attired gentlemen carrying small banners of red and white bunting. They stood by a little table on which was a basket. In the background were some ladies in formal kimono. I was invited to leave my card in the basket.

I asked what was written on the flags.

"They are the four characters meaning 'Welcome home Miss H.' Would you like one?"

So when Miss H. passed through the wicket and bowed to the head of our delegation, I waved my flag with the others. I managed to exchange a word or two and then lost her in the turmoil.

I had forgotten all about it when a few days later my postman handed me a printed card in Japanese. It was from Miss H., thanking me in very formal language for having welcomed her at Tokyo station, and giving me her new address.



Everyone who had left his card in the little basket, and there were many, received a similar attention.

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Few customs are more delightful than that of *o-miage*, bringing home souvenirs from one's trip as gifts. No matter where he has been and how unimportant the journey, no Japanese would dream of coming home without a present for the family. Mother may merely go out shopping in the morning, but her return always means a present, beside the necessary purchases. If the family go to the theatre, they buy an *o-miage* costing a few sen to take back for the servant. When holidays are over, one usually brings back presents for the boys at the office as well as for the family. These gifts are always some "famous product" of the district visited. If one has been wintering in sunny Atami, he will bring oranges; or in Shizuoka, tea.

Sometimes, however, a man will forget to buy those famous rice-cakes made at Kitanohara where he spent the week-end, and only remember on his way home. But this is no tragedy. He can find the very cakes with the genuine name on them — in Tokyo.

Hard by Tokyo Station is a veritable museum of local products, a succession of small shops selling the special foods of every town and region in Japan.

To them the absent-minded traveler repairs at the end of his journey. If by that time he has also forgotten what he should have bought, he need only mention to the shopkeeper the name of the place he visited.

“From Nagano? Then how about a basket of these fine Nagano apples? Or maybe several tins of Nagano’s famous bamboo sprouts?”

\* \* \*

Like the railway terminals in other world capitals, Tokyo Station contains an hotel in its upper stories, and restaurants, tea rooms and barber shops in the spacious floor underground. But one feature distinguishes it from them all: its hot spring baths. One goes down a steep flight of steps over which read the gilt letters: SHOJI’S FOUNTAIN HOT WATER BATHING POOL ESTABLISHED IN THE YEAR 1870. After passing a spacious showcase on the landing that contains a life-like model of every dish served by the restaurant below, one comes to the glass doors at the end of a long, panelled corridor.

You pay at a counter in the lobby, receive a number, and step out of your boots into a large room with a matted floor and walls lined with lockers. On presenting your number to an adipose matron, a cubicle is unlocked for you. In this most select of hot spring baths in the capital, the

charge is 30 sen per person, five times as much as the humble public bath-house. There are individual foreign-style baths as well, but the communal pool is the most frequented. After leaving clothes and valuables under the matron's supervision, you are given soap and towel and enter the bath.

After the drabness of the station upstairs, it is a veritable scene of the Arabian Nights. One steps into a hall two or three stories high dazzling with electric lights. Light is reflected by every tile that covers the floor and walls, by the copper border of the pool and the innumerable faucets. Only the sound of rushing water disturbs the calm. In the centre of the pool of turquoise green, reflecting the tiles on its bottom, plays a graceful fountain. In the back of the hall is a chaotic mass of natural boulders rising to the ceiling, down which tumbles a cascade whose waters follow a brook into the pool.

Here one may forget the heat and dust of travel and relax before plunging once more into city life. It is often out of the question to put up at an hotel, if one has an early appointment shortly after his arrival. But one may enjoy an hour's immersion here, while his suits are being pressed and his boots blacked. People also enter the bath before going on a long night journey. For the pleasant after-glow will accompany them in the train and make

sleep easy. The only discordant detail in this palace of forgetfulness is a gigantic clock over the door. But it is a necessary one.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Our Village*

THE motorman on our morning train was most affable to commuters. And the old woman at the level crossing, who could see us without emerging from her paper-walled sentry-box, always nodded us a good morning. When, late as usual, we would run to catch the train just pulled in, she would keep the barrier half raised to let us cross the tracks to the other side.

“We beg you to be honourably fast!” was the most the conductor would say. But when he apologized to the passengers, “We have kept you honourably waiting!” after the train had started, we always felt rather uncomfortable.

The barrier keeper held out a white flag when we passed—she probably had no red one—and we saw no more of the “village” until evening.

Our village is now part of Tokyo—on the map. But the life in its single main street has not changed much. In the square by the station, servants and little girls carrying babies behind, still come to see their friends off by the fence of old railway ties. Nearby stand two black rikisha with gleaming



nickel spokes and copper fixtures. Inside their little shack sit the runners, hard at a game of chess, with four or five spectators round the door. Thus they while away the hours, waiting for some customer who has gone off without an umbrella and may find himself marooned by a sudden shower.

Yet the village square is not always so sleepy. Some time in January the firemen come there to entertain the inhabitants with an exhibition of acrobatics rivalling those given in the Plaza of the Imperial Palace. They dress like their ancestors of feudal days, in short blue jacket bearing the crest of the guild, and twisted cotton towels tied round their brows. The old hooks and bamboo ladders are taken out, and the standard of the company. This is a large white disc bearing the company's number, on the end of a long pole from which hangs a skirt of leather cords. It is borne at the head of the procession by a stalwart fireman who makes the leather thongs twist and swell like the grass skirt of a South Sea islander. Behind comes the brigade with long ladders and poles armed with hooks.

The whole village turns out to watch, and during the most daring stunt, the motorman holds up the train for a minute as he stares upward. Six or seven firemen maintain one of the longest ladders straight up in the air with their hooked poles.

Then one of the nimblest climbs up into space until he can go no further. There he seems to ignore the law of gravitation by holding himself out horizontally, his feet braced in the top rungs, while his comrades below sweatingly hold up the ladder.

\*       \*       \*

The square is also the starting point for the *chin-don-ya*, those musicians of the street hired for advertising purposes. They are often seen in down town Tokyo, wearily tramping along crowded thoroughfares, dressed like a samurai or harlequin, no matter how hot the weather. They are clowns who smile in spite of their lot, with sallow faces hidden beneath lively paint, and feelings unheard amidst the clash of cymbals.

The *chin-don-ya* of our neighbourhood always started from the railway station, went up the high street and conscientiously took in all the side roads besides. This ambulant orchestra consisted of a bass drum, a *samisen*, a bamboo flute, a kettle drum, and sometimes a bugle. Heard from the station it did sound something like *chin-don-chin-don*. The men in the band were not always the same fellows; sometimes there were youthful students of music, sometimes old players out of work. But the shop they advertised was always the general

goods store that held frequent amazing 'bankruptcy' sales.

The kettle-drum, which included cymbals, led the procession because of his musical importance; he was shielded inadequately by a diminutive parasol fixed to the framework of his portable battery. Then came the *samisen* plunked by a woman in old-fashioned hair-dress and flaming scarlet kimono. She had much difficulty in making herself heard, as the bugle behind always fought with the rest of the instruments. Two or three fellows carrying tall pennants announcing the sale brought up the rear, with one or two boys who stuffed handbills into letter boxes.

One evening we hired the chief member of the *chin-don-ya* to come and pose at our sketch club meeting. He was frail and shabby in his ill-fitting Western clothes as he bowed his way in with smiles, quite unlike the leader of the group that marched down our road with blaring trumpet and blaze of colour. He had brought with him an enormous bundle, his costume and orchestra wrapped up in a kerchief.

Soon he was his old self as the children knew and him, a grinning harlequin in red and white striped bloomers that fitted tightly round the calves, a coat of black and gold, and a turquoise green bandanna wound round the forehead like a turban. His ker-

chief further yielded up all his instruments with the frame that supported them, into which he stepped like in a harness. Finally he was ready, standing on the pale rice mats in absolute silence; he, the noisiest man for miles around, now willing to pose with drums, bells and an open parasol.

"I've been fifteen years at it," he confessed during a well-earned pause, during which he walked about and gesticulated. Twenty minutes of forced immobility and silence had tired him more than an afternoon's work.

"Are there many in your profession?"

"Very few; people don't want to take the trouble to learn nowadays, but I have two pupils. It is too difficult; it takes three years to learn anything at all."

"Three years!"

"*Hai!* Why, it is extremely difficult. The steps are so complicated," he went on, giving demonstrations. "When you start off with the right foot, you have to hit the big drum with the left hand at the same time. When the left foot moves, you beat the small drum with the right hand. Then the whole body leans forward to the left like this, drums in the same line. Then there's this bell"—it looked like a flat copper plate standing on end—"which must always be struck in the same spot."

"What tunes do you play?" an artist managed to insert.

"Right now we have war songs," he went on in almost the same breath. "The rythm is not so easy as it sounds, and the arm and leg movements are all different again. We must take care not to make too amusing faces or gestures when playing certain songs, although our object is to make children laugh all the time. Some tunes we can't play at all or we are fined. It's very easy to find out, of course"—here he smiled broadly—"as we can be heard from quite a distance."

We expressed a desire to hear the big drum, and the *chin-don-ya* stopped talking long enough to clear his throat.

"Saaaaa, but it would startle the neighbours!"

And he stepped back into his pose, which he had suggested himself. It showed him in one of his most active and noisy moments. But no sound issued from his formidable battery; only his restrained breathing was heard as he stood motionless, beads of sweat trickling from under his turban.

At his next sitting a week later, our *chin-don-ya* was less communicative. It was a quiet evening; there were fewer artists and he had been given a more restful pose, squatting on the mats.

"I'll arrange my instruments about me and sit like when I take a rest at noon," he suggested.

And again his own pose was better than any we could have imagined. He was sitting there in pensive mood, when the artist's young son, who many times had watched the *chin-don-ya* pass by the house during the day, burst in to see him at close quarters. And he merely smiled when the boy started pounding on the bass drum.

After the séance was over our musician unburdened himself :

“You are thinking of making a school? Because I just had an idea, though I really know nothing about such things. But I thought that instead of sitting in a room with a screen behind me, which is not my usual background, why not go somewhere in the country where you could draw me in real scenery, with trees and clouds? A crowd would soon collect and ask what we were doing. Then you could tell them you had a drawing school and they would all want to join.”

Perhaps we didn't show enough enthusiasm. But the *chin-don-ya* never came to his third sitting.

\* \* \*

Nakai has almost every kind of shop ; one can even buy radios. Opposite the station is a modern French-style bakery, where *choux*-cream are quite good. The baker is an ingenious man. As English is little used here, and people might confuse an “l”

with an "r,"—they sound alike to Japanese—our baker included both letters. The shop sign reads 'BAKERLY,' so that everyone is satisfied. And another hint of irrepressible wit is found in the words, "Flesh Cakes" across his window.

The woman who runs the Japanese cake-shop always smiles at us in the morning, as we show much interest in her rice dumplings and bean jam buns. The grocer, when he is not dusting off his pyramids of shining apples, acts as our liaison officer with the city, receiving telephone calls and sending the messages to our house by cyclist.

On the square stands a wine house, "The Monkey's Tail," where hot saké and ice-cold beer are served in all seasons. The buxom woman in kimono and monumental coiffure who manages the place could hardly be called a bar-maid; she is much too dignified. She will serve saké as hot as you want it, will keep your thimble cup filled, but will never touch a drop herself. Across the way is an outdoor "stand and eat" booth. When "The Monkey's Tail" closes at twelve, those who find the night still young go behind the short curtain of the *tachi-gui* booth, where they can order chicken liver broiled over charcoal. The lights of this booth are usually the only ones in the village at that hour, and sometimes late diners are silhouetted against its white curtain at one or two in the morning.





Our *sushi-ya* hard by the tracks, stays open until one, for the last train, and tempts the late home-comer with his brilliantly illuminated counter of black lacquer and bright red fish under glass. He already knows our taste and inserts an extra pinch of pungent horse-radish between a rice ball and a slice of raw tunny on top of it. On rainy evenings when we have forgotten our waterproofs he always lends us his large yellow *kasa* of oiled paper and bamboo ribs, reminding us to bring it down the next morning.

Earlier in the evening the high street is so resplendent with bare electric lights hanging in the shops that street lamps become superfluous. The fruit shop spreads its grapes and mandarines and golden *natsu-mikan*, a kind of grape-fruit, well out into the street in an inviting manner. Children run up and down incessantly, clattering in wooden clogs, and brandishing bamboo swords as they imitate the samurai they see at the pictures.

\* \* \*

Before the two second-hand bookshops stand lonely students in thin kimono, bare feet in *geta* and hair dishevelled, rummaging through the trays of old books at five sen a copy. A few sen will keep the servant in reading matter for a good while, for there are plenty of magazines picturing modern

Japanese and foreign actresses on their covers that are her predilection.

The interior of the book shop harbours late readers by its shelves around the walls. The proprietor nods over a novel at his low table in the back, on the small mat-covered platform that gives one a view into his living room.

A tolerant man he is, to let us stand for hours poring over some musty volume ; he never says a word. Extremely patient, he looks indulgently on would-be customers, who pull out one book after another, complete the circuit of the shop, and finally leave without books but with their head full of stories.

A good part of his collection is composed of English text-books, all pretty well marked up. Many of them have only been partly read, for after chapter two or three the close translation in fine pencilled Japanese running between the lines suddenly ends. Or is it that the student has improved and remembers? Anyhow, that is the fate of Emerson's Essays, Washington Irving's Sketch Book, and the Vicar of Wakefield.

There is Longfellow, too, and Whitman, and all Macaulay for one yen forty ! Then, like in most bookstores in Tokyo, there are several editions of Poe's Tales, and all of Lafcadio Hearn. In the back of the shop stand the dictionaries in monoto-

nous rows, a surprising variety of them. Many are the ambitious students who study them morning and night, standing in trains and oblivious of the crowds getting on and off.

When you buy a book in one of these shops, you are expected to do a little bargaining, just for the fun of it, if for no other purpose. The prices are all marked inside, but it is customary to ask anyway, and then say, "Isn't that a little too high?" You give the shopkeeper time to say a few nothings about his impossibility of making any profit even at the price asked. Then, after a moment of silence, you ask: "Please go down a little." He usually does, though it may only be five sen, and everyone is happy.

But if one can buy books for a song, selling books in these shops is quite another story. I once brought him the *Essays of Hazlitt* and *Leigh Hunt*, and *Thomas à Kempis*. He offered me fifty sen for the three. "Not sixty sen?" I asked. "Ah, even fifty is more than I should give for them," he sighed. "These authors are so little known here."

\* \* \*

Our village has its chess club, where the Japanese variant of the oldest game in the world is played nearly every evening. Its glass doors look into a narrow street lit by red and white lanterns,

for the shops here do not have neon signs. The club is a bare room with a mat-covered floor, and usually filled with elderly men in kimono, gravely sitting before chess-boards. The "board" is a solid block of white wood more than a foot thick, that rests on four knobs for feet. It is really a small but very heavy table, that cannot be knocked over easily.

Each player has beside him a little stand on which he places the captured pieces, so that his opponent can see them. For a captured piece is not dead, but may be used by the player who won it. Thus every time a player loses a piece, he really loses twofold, for it not only decreases the number of his own men, but increases that of his opponent. The field remains as crowded as ever, with the difference that the unlucky player's men have turned traitor. This accounts for the little stand on which a piece is placed at the time of capture, ready to be used again. In Japanese chess most of the worry lies not in figuring out what piece your opponent is going to move next, but what captured piece he may put back into action and where he might place it. Like a bomb it can land right in the enemy's lines.

Twenty dramatic battles may be going on at once, and there are some tense moments, but a respectful silence reigns, broken only by the sound

of a piece being placed on the board. For conversation one must go to the public bath.

There are two public bath-houses in Nakai. One of them raises its graceful eaves over the roofs of the town, and the other stands alone on the edge of some rice-fields. After the hot city, it is pleasant to change into a cotton kimono, slip bare feet in *geta*, and walk out into the country for a bath before supper, equipped with soap and a comb, and a towel over one shoulder.

The ruddy-faced little bath girl checks our *geta*, takes our six sen and throws us a basket for our clothes. She showed apprehension in her large eyes when we first bathed there. Whether she had held the belief that foreigners were afflicted with tails or were covered with hair like the Ainu, we could not tell, but later she paid no more attention to us.

One evening we arrived to find the men's side of the bath closed. Our bath girl directed us to the women's partition. "It is all right," she assured us, "no one is in now." On the other side of the low dividing wall appeared the head and arms of a painter in the men's bath, no doubt on a ladder. He was conscientiously painting mountains and tea-houses that seemed to rest in mid-air, over the large canvas scene that covered the whole back wall of the bath. It had pictured deep sea life,

but now the fierce old octopus that had so often looked down on us with his little red eyes was gone for ever, gradually covered up by a lovely green lake where sailboats glided lazily.

Next evening the mural masterpiece of bath-house art was finished, and we could return to our side of the bath. The canvas represented an inland sea with islands and mountains. The sword-fish and the octopus and all the other strange creatures of the deep had disappeared, and yet they were still there, lurking under the blue waters of the new scene.

The famous hot spring of Beppu, nearly a thousand kilometres away in Japan's southwestern isle, was really at our very door in the public bath. For in a special compartment of the pool one may enjoy the high medicinal properties of its muddy waters. "These mineral waters are good for stomach and liver complaints, poor blood, nervous disorders, and *rumacheez*," which means rheumatism, reads a notice over this partition of the bath. It is quite deep and dark in there, and one may only hear groans of appreciation at the water's temperature and indistinctly make out the head of some elderly man, as if floating on the surface, independent of his body.

During the dog days it is the custom to spend afternoons sitting before the electric fan in the

dressng room, where one can dry himself without effort. Or one may lounge on the balcony overlooking a pocket-size garden and read the newspaper, listening to the radio program at the same time. In the dog days, one takes a long time to walk home, along the dark path crossing the rice fields where a frog gives an occasional croak. Then one wears the damp towel on the head, and tucks the corners of the *yukata* up under his sash, just in case there might be a puff of cool wind somewhere.

On these nights we usually find our landlord in his room on our way home, with all sliding walls pushed back. He is lying on his back, having surrendered to the summer luxury of a masseur, while his wife looks on to supervise.

There is an old man attached to the bathhouse, who massages our shoulders sometimes, but his chief duty is washing people's backs. He is a mere amateur compared to the blind masseur, whose profession originated in China and has been kept alive through the centuries. He is a lonely figure, the blind masseur, as he walks through the quiet streets at night, blowing a high note on his plaintive reed flute. All members of his profession are afflicted with blindness, and for that reason received official protection and privileges long before any other citizen. If any customer tried to take advantage of a masseur, such as refusing to pay for

services rendered, the masseur was entitled to carry away anything he could lay his hands on in that man's house. If the client persisted in not paying his debt, the masseur was free to go before his door and denounce him as a thief to the whole village.



## CHAPTER X

### *Suburban Diversions*

THERE are always a number of children on our square who seem to be waiting for somebody. They are expecting any minute the *kami-shibai* or 'paper theatre man,' who makes frequent, though irregular visits, to our quarter. When he does arrive, boys even postpone their cicada hunting expeditions to see him, and arrive on the scene with their long bamboo poles coated on the end with fish glue, and sometimes two or three singing insects in closed fists.

There are thousands of 'paper theatre men' in Tokyo, and even so, not enough to give performances to the legions of children. Ours is a kindly faced man of about fifty, who visits our quarter on warm days by bicycle. People who have never seen him at work might mistake him for a delivery man as he rides about, carrying a load like a packing-case behind. He almost always dismounts on the village square, stands his bicycle in a quiet spot, and converts his packing case into a window frame for the stage, behind which he will slip the different scenes painted on cardboard.

Everything he manages alone, acting as property man, director and producer at the same time. He also supplies the voices of the protagonist, the leading lady, if there is one, and all other *dramatis personae*, whom he impersonates with remarkable realism.

This versatile artist needs only to blow a few notes on an old bugle which he produces from some recess of his portable theatre, before most of his spectators arrive. Most boys and girls from five to ten are there on the dot, the youngest greeting him by climbing over him as if he were their grandfather. But something is wrong, for our impresario doesn't begin.

"Where is little Akiko?" he finally asks.

"She says to tell you she can't go out today," pipes up a small voice out of breath.

This settled, the theatre man collects one *sen* from each of his small spectators, which he puts away in a drawer in his box. Then he pulls out another drawer, and his clients close round him, standing on tip-toe to see inside. Taking some fresh pine sticks, he rolls around each generous masses of a pale yellow, glutinous substance. It is a kind of molasses, made of millet gluten. Although it is far from being liquid, some boys are never satisfied, and break their stick in two, in order to knead the gluten into a thicker consistency. This

is a delicate operation, and the molasses sometimes falls off in the dusty square. But these sons of Yedo take their loss philosophically, merely stepping on it. For there is still the play, included in the one *sen* fee.

Some people say that the paper theatre man is much more interested in selling millet gluten than giving plays, but then they have not seen our dramatist, who puts all his soul into his art, which he enjoys as much as his youthful audience.

After waiting a moment more for any late-comers, our impresario arms himself with a pair of heavy sticks like those used by the fire watcher, and strikes them together, gradually increasing in speed.

*Hajime-masho!* "Let's begin!" he finally announces, when the audience has formed a compact semi-circle around the stage on the back of the bicycle, the youngest in front and a few messenger boys on their cycles peering over the heads of the rest. The theatre man arranges the cardboard slides in the order of the story and pulls them out of the window one by one as the action progresses.

Sometimes it is a comedy, such as the adventures of Mickey Mouse in Japan, or the trials of a provincial grandfather and his grandson lost in the maze of Tokyo's streets. There may also be a drama, picturing the adventures of Tarzan in the jungle, or a historical play of feudal days full of

sword battles, or a tale of mountain bandits. Sometimes our dramatist even gives a modern serial. A soldier walking through the tall grass of the Manchurian plain finds an abandoned baby. He carries it home to show his wife, and they decide to adopt it. The boy grows up, and all goes well until one day he disappears. He has been kidnapped,—but here the play ends, to be continued next week. While the dramatist busies himself with taking out the old slides to reveal the new one behind them, he is continually speaking in three or four different voices at once. Dramatic moments he punctuates by sounding a deep, resonant bell.

The *kami-shibai-ya* is given a hearty send-off by his appreciative audience, who warn him not to be late next time. Sometimes the boys will run behind his bicycle for a while, until dramatist and theatre are well under way.

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A grand scenic view of the country traversed by our suburban train decorates the wall of the station at the end of the line. It takes almost two hours to go all the way, out into the plain of Musashi to the foot of the mountains that one can see on clear days. The map is most complete, depicting the crowded grey roofs of villages along the line. Then these grow scarce, and the tracks run among

pinces and rice fields, past two or three lakes. One of these is "Fuji-Viewing Pond," shown on the panorama complete with islands, tea house, boats and landing wharf.

We went there one hot summer day, with our neighbour's two daughters. For nineteen sen, and in twenty minutes, we were in real country, among thatch-roofed houses and vast farms with well-swept yards, and fresh white paper walls showing behind the rush awnings to keep out the sun. The living quarters of these farmhouses are on the right of the entrance gate; they have high roofs and triangular attic windows under the eaves. The large barn stands opposite, while facing the gate between them, is the godown, a two-storey building of concrete where the family treasures are kept, secure from fire and earthquake. A thick wood of lacy bamboo usually surrounds the buildings, giving shade in the day time and providing music at night when southern breezes sigh through it.

Sometimes an old woman is seen sitting on the edge of the verandah before a primitive loom, passing and repassing the shuttle, while grandfather tends his dwarf pines, puffing now and then at his long pipe. We walk through fields of tall mulberry bushes and on the edge of the field, under a few pines, find a wooden shrine three feet high, with a bright red Dharma seated gravely beside it.

Our Fuji-Viewing Pond is a sluggish stream that describes two wide bends round a miniature islet, before narrowing again into a canal that goes out under a bridge. A tea house stands there, which not only serves tea, but "parent and child bowl," chicken and eggs cut up fine, on top of a bowl of rice.

The captain, dressed in a black uniform, sits behind a table in the open air near the wharf. His cap bears a striking resemblance to that of the conductors on our line, and we learn that many of the officials connected with the company bring their families here to benefit by the reduced rates. Beside the captain is a large megaphone, used to hail late boating parties at the other end of the pond, and spread out on his table is a chart on which the exact time of arrival and departure of his craft are recorded. We dare to address him, and he very politely helps us into a boat.

Our fair companions volunteer to do the rowing, but are finally very pleased to sit in the stern and let their arms trail in the water. Fuji-san does not appear, in spite of the name of this lake, and the sun is hot. We imitate the other boaters, and nestle under some friendly willow branches where young men with his kimono sleeves rolled up to the shoulders sip soda water through straws.

All during the summer and early autumn, on the 6th, 16th and 26th of the month, or on the night following when it rains, the people in our village dance in the temple compound. Large paper lanterns dimly light the platform under the trees covered with red and white bunting, on which is a loudspeaker connected to a gramophone. Many evenings we spent there, watching the dancers under the melon coloured moon.

All the young men and girls of our neighbourhood are there by eight o'clock, filling the wide space of beaten earth in the centre of the compound. Flitting shapes in blue and white *yukata* find their places and gravely dance the *ondo*, punctuating the rythm of the song and dance by graceful movements and clapping of hands. They dance in a circle, the men forming one half and the girls the other. Long sleeves wave right and left in unison, and the ornaments of heavy coiffures glitter in the lantern light. Behind the chestnut trees, clear-cut against the blue-black sky, rise like stage scenery the temple eaves.

Most of the dancers know the *ondo* by heart, and those who are just learning try as much as possible to be behind them, where they can follow the movements. The plump bar-maid of "The Monkey's Tail" was a beginner; we spied her imitating another dancer very conscientiously, obli-  
vi-

ous of everything else. There was the village clown, too, who would mimic the women, exaggerating their movements, and causing spectators to hold their stomachs with laughter. But the dancers remained enwrapped in the music, only smiling indifferently at his antics.

As the evening wears on, the circle becomes thinner; the *ondo* dancers drop out, two or three at a time. Couples are seen wandering in the deep shadows among the temples, and returning by country lanes. No words have been exchanged in public, and if glances were, they must have been quicker than lightning.

\* \* \*

Autumn mornings are quiet at Nakai and all day the air is clear and the sky is high. The sun greets us faithfully for weeks, and casts the shadow of the balcony railing against the translucent paper doors that open on the corridor. All except for their base of wood a foot high, the sliding doors are made of a delicate lattice-work of rectangles covered with spotless white paper. A pane of glass is fitted into each one, a little lower than the centre, permitting a person seated on the mats to see outside. Through them comes the chirping of birds as clearly as if they were in the room.

What a feeling of security one has in a Japanese



style room, as one lies in the middle of the vast expanse of matting, vast because of so little furniture! There is nothing to fall over and break, or strike one. The book-case with its three shelves, standing in a corner, and the two-winged kimono hanger of black lacquer are the highest pieces of furniture. It is comfortable living on the mats in autumn; one remembers childhood days when the carpet was the favourite playground. With a smooth, springy surface of pale green rice straw, twelve feet by twelve, to lay things on, a desk becomes useless. There is nothing to fall off of tables, and one can take as many books to bed as he pleases.

From my window I can see over the neighbour's wall into a luxuriant garden which conceals part of the house open to the morning sun. Often a woman kneels near the edge of the balcony, gracefully combing her long black hair, that hangs like a curtain of heavy silk. She is framed by the leafless branches of a crooked persimmon tree laden with golden fruit as large as apples, like those of some enchanted garden. The roof is lost among the pines. The air is very still; out of the valley rises the rhythmic tapping of wood on wood, which accompanies the morning devotions of the militant Nichiren sect.

The smell of incense is wafted up to my balcony; the landlady below us is probably lighting

the sticks that burn before the household shrine on the shelf in the family room. She must climb on to a stool to light them and the pair of candles in their brass candlesticks. Then she offers a sample of the first cooked rice of the day to the spirits of her ancestors, as well as to the Sun Goddess who created Nippon.

\* \* \*

All about us are fine residences, and many large estates occupy the surrounding hills. Every morning maid-servants in white aprons come down our road, sometimes fighting hard to prevent from being forced into a run by some powerful mastiff or Newfoundland dog with a giant collar. These dogs always have their morning constitutional, even when it rains. In wet weather a wiry little man with kimono pulled up over his knees goes by with a greyhound wearing a rubber coat. A small boy follows along beside them under an enormous *kasa*. *Muku*, which means "Shaggy," our landlady's dog, of uncertain breed, is always exasperated by these aristocratic strollers, who pass by with hardly a glance at him.

Our neighbour's children had often been paying us silent visits. They would stand for long minutes at our door, open to let the breeze run through. They would watch me with insatiable

curiosity as I wrote on the typewriter. After many such visits we became friends and more talkative.

On Armistice Day they came, Misako, eight years old, with her little sister Akiko half her age. They were rather shy at first, and wouldn't step out of their red clogs and walk on the reed mats spread over the grass. However, our student friend that we called the metaphysician, because he was nearly always immersed in Spinoza, gave them confidence, and they soon forgot the green eyes of the foreigners. Little Akiko even climbed into my lap, where she showed me how to fold a piece of paper into a very lively-looking stork.

Both sisters already knew some English, which they spoke with the naïve accent of Japanese children.

"Foreign children are so much more intelligent," said Misako, excusing her mistakes.

Akiko, prompted a little by her sister, one day sang us the lullaby "Sleep, baby sleep." She pronounced it "Sureep, baby, sureep," and didn't miss a word. Our metaphysician promised to tell a story if she sang another one, so we heard "Tureenkle, tureenkle, leeteru star" in a modified version. After which they listened in rapt silence to the story in Japanese of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. And they were not satisfied until they heard two ghost stories besides.

A few days later Misako-san asked me most casually, out of a clear sky, if I would teach her English.

## CHAPTER XI

### *A Family New Year*

NEW Year is only ten days away, when we are invited by our little friends to a game of "Poems of One Hundred Men." *Karuta* they also call the game, from the Portuguese word for cards. At our neighbour's house we meet the rest of the family after being shown upstairs in a spacious ten-mat room.

Yoshiko-san, the elder sister, is a quiet girl of about sixteen, tall and slender, with an oval face and delicate features. Her large eyes have in them a tinge of melancholy accentuated by the curve of her lips. Yukiko, one year younger, is lively in comparison, with merry slits of eyes, now kindly, now faintly ironical. She dresses in *Western* style, and shows very good taste.

Dignified Mrs. S. their mother, volunteers to play, her daughters choose sides, and we remain the interested spectators. The two allies sit side by side, with twenty-five cards arranged in convenient order in front of each player. On each card is written the last part of a thirty-two syllable poem. Mother sits at one end and reads in a

chanting monotone from another set of cards, which bear the first part of the poems before each player. The object of the game is to immediately pick up the card on which is written the other half of the poem recited, the first one to be rid of her cards being the winner.

Yukiko is so well versed in the hundred classical poems that she often cries "Hai!" before Mother has read three words. It is a battle of wits between the elder sisters, until Misako, who has done nothing until then, suddenly cries "Hai!" too, and swiftly picks up a card belonging to Yukiko, opposite her. She had recognized it first even though it was upside down, so Yukiko is penalized by having to receive an extra card from Misako.

\* \* \*

During the New Year holidays, we have many an exciting game of battledore and shuttlecock in our garden, and lose shuttlecocks in the trees and on the roofs. Now little Akiko is dressed in a red coat and bonnet and a little red mask to match covering her nose and mouth. Men appear in long, black coats with short capes that have been designed for wearing with kimono, and which sweep gracefully as they walk, like some padre's cassock. Now the baby dozes warmly on its mother's back, with only the top of its head emerging from the layers

of clothes that enwrap them both. The gas stove vendor has come again, with his little shop on wheels. Commuters like to linger before it, as several stoves are always burning a cheerful red for advertising purposes. Now the train platform walls are covered with gay posters inviting the skier and the skater to snowy hills and mirror-like lakes, with this irresistible caption: "Toward Health in the Great Outdoors!"

As New Year approaches, we receive invitations from all our close neighbours to drop in for the traditional broth with the aromatic herbs and pounded rice cake floating in it. If we promised everyone who invited us that we would come, we would have burst. Our little friends call on us soon after Christmas and make us promise to visit their house first. There were no festivities on Christmas in our village, which holds to its old calendar; no Mardi-Gras costumes of harlequins and pierrots, with masks and confetti, outnumbering Santa Clauses, as in the capital. Here December 25 was the anniversary of the death of the Emperor Taisho.

"Your honourable grandfather Christmas is not true!" little Akiko told me.

On New Year's day, although the sky is blue, we hear a pattering as of rain on the lower roof and in the drain pipe. It is the vigorous winter sun of the East melting the night's snow.

“As the New Year opens, felicitations!” The ritual phrase is heard every moment, all around us. After which we drink with our friends the sweet rice wine as thick as syrup, poured in three flat saucers of black and gold, each smaller than the other, poised on a tray of lacquer six inches high. “Health” read the golden character in the first saucer; “Happiness” said the next, and “Long Life” was the wish of the third.

At Akiko’s house we first became acquainted with the winter version of the charcoal brazier. It is enclosed in a wooden cage over which it is perfectly safe to lay a thick quilt, to warm one’s legs under. It is a large quilt of many colours under which we are invited to nestle up to our shoulders. Ah, the pleasant familiarity of the quilt-covered brazier! Japanese feel the same cheer with their *kotatsu*, as they call it, that we do round our blazing hearth. Indeed it is refreshing to sit warmly and look out on the snow, with the sliding panels of the wall pushed back to give an uninterrupted view of the old trees on the hill.

Misako reaches out to scoop up the remaining snow on the window sill. She puts it on a tray, and fashions it into a life-like rabbit. Two long, narrow leaves she sticks in for ears, and the eyes are red berries. We admired it hastily, as it sat on top of the *kotatsu* and was soon drowned in its own tears.



The street resounds with the tap-tap of battledore players, who keep up interminable contests until it is too dark to see the shuttlecock. Shop-boys are playing battledore with waitresses whose hair is dressed in the traditional style for New Year's. Delivery vans make their first trips of the year, with flags flying; others are returning with the men behind full of saké and song. Gentlemen in morning coats are carrying gifts in silk kerchiefs; shopkeepers are making calls and leaving their cards in each other's baskets specially provided for the purpose in the vestibule. Everywhere are smiles and happiness, as all debts have been paid, all wrongs righted, all enemies forgiven, and all work forgotten for the present. The Year of the Rat has made way for the Year of the Ox.

Our neighbours all wear new kimono to start the year right. Akiko's little red clogs are still so tight that she cannot slip her toes far enough under the thongs to keep them on securely.

Before every door hangs the bitter orange of auspicious omen, the fern and the white paper bands, offerings to the gods. Everything that moves on wheels is similarly decorated; our rikisha men adorn their vehicle with a baby lobster, bright red, a symbol of longevity; even the fire-engine, freshly washed and polished, has an orange and ferns on the radiator.



## PART TWO



## CHAPTER XII

### *Country Life*

MY host sent over his man of all chores, a kind of majordomo, to help me move. He went over the house thoroughly from the storage place under the kitchen floor-boards to the platform on the roof where clothes are hung up to dry. At the end of his search he brought out everything I had left in the bottom of closets to get rid of.

"No use taking all this," I assured him.

"That doesn't matter," he explained. "There is plenty of room on the lorry. We'll sort it all out over there."

Then, as his eye travelled over the walls,

"This is yours, isn't it?" and he was going to pull out the bell cord, when I stopped him. He could hardly bear to leave behind the glass lamp shades and the letter box that belonged to the house. Had I told him the camellia tree was mine, he would have immediately unearthed it.

Our majordomo sorted out things as he said he would when we arrived at the new domicile, but gave me nearly everything back.

"What do you want me to do with this?" I

asked, as he handed me five or six tin boxes, a bucket with holes in it, and other odds and ends.

“Just keep them a day or so. The ironmonger will be around to buy them.”

“What do you think it’s worth?”

“Why, he ought to give you ten or twelve sen,” he said hopefully.

\* \* \*

Less than five minutes after the lorry had stopped before our new home, almost the entire neighbourhood had heard of the event. Delivery boys with bicycles were soon swarming about in the garden, expressing the hope that we would like our new house, and asking for the honour of our kind patronage.

“We have had long experience in dealing with foreign sirs, and can satisfy you,” they promised. “Please accept the card of the house.”

So said in very much the same manner the representative of the local grocer, fishmonger, charcoal dealer, bean curd manufacturer, and many more.

One of the first to arrive was the milkman. An enterprising fellow, he did not mention milk, but helped carry in our bags, though we told him the men on the lorry would take care of that.

“Shall I bring two quarts of milk and one

cream beginning tomorrow?" he finally asked.

"Sorry, but we never take milk."

He did not look convinced. All foreigners drank milk.

"Then perhaps one quart to begin with?"

"Milk doesn't agree with us."

"Really? Then I'll be around tomorrow, please accept the card of the house." And with a smile and bow, he left.

\* \* \*

One afternoon a little man in short white jacket and a loin cloth round his muscular legs entered our garden. He carried several flat boxes from either end of a bamboo pole balanced on one shoulder. He couldn't be the bean curd vendor, who called in the morning; besides, he had no horn. The shallow containers he uncovered were full of live fish, gold fish swimming in very little water. One fellow nearly a foot long was gasping in a receptacle by himself.

The pedler thought he saw a glimmer of compassion in our eyes, for he did his best to sell us this last fish. In our garden was a sunken iron ring, probably a section of drain pipe, that served as a pond. The big fish, which we learned was a carp, we did not believe would be happy in such restricted quarters.

"But last year I sold one even bigger than this to the people living here!" he insisted.

We were interested in a coal-black fish with a diminutive body and long wing-like fins and graceful tail.

"They don't get along well alone, better have another one to keep him company," the pedler advised us.

We finally threw in the pond about 80 sen's worth of fish, ranging from bright vermillion to pure white, all together more than the carp itself would have cost.

In the garden was a miniature red shrine on a high stone foundation. It was dedicated to O-Inari-san, the goddess of harvests and material prosperity. O-Haru often cleaned it the first thing in the morning, and placed fresh cupfuls of water and rice before the servants of the goddess. These were two lean foxes of porcelain that stood on either side of the little altar. It was on such a morning that she came running in precipitately, and managed to say,

"Two red ones are missing. I counted them over three times!"

We covered the pond with wire netting, but on the following morning found it pulled off, and another fish gone. Like soldiers in a besieged fort they fell one after another during the succeed-



ing two weeks, to some mysterious night prowler very familiar with our garden.

O-Inari-san evidently did not extend her protection to gold fish. At the end of summer, only the black fish remained, swimming around as if nothing had ever happened. They owed their survival perhaps to their black coats that made them quasi-invisible at night.

Repairing the *shoji* was the first task that confronted us in our new home. Unless a house is uninhabited, torn *shoji* is a sign of degradation. No man is too poor to have clean *shoji*. We found ours torn to shreds in places, and the wind blew freely through.

Before beginning repairs we had the rare pleasure of deliberately poking holes through a good many little-damaged squares of translucent paper, and lacerating them with knives. This was, however, far from the orgy of destruction that takes place on the classical stage, when warriors slash at *shoji* through and through.

It took nearly all afternoon to paste new paper over the window frames and the sliding doors on the hall. They were first divested of old paper and laid on the floor. Then one side of the framework was covered with paste, over which was laid fresh strips of paper, cut from a thick roll. One must be skilful with the razor in cutting the torn

paper off without damaging the good squares next to it. One of our doors when completed was a veritable patchwork of white squares mixed with different shades of yellow and brown, showing their different ages. But this is a sign of economy, and is never frowned upon.

Haruko was ingenious in matters of economy. For instance, she insisted we didn't need an ice-chest: she used the well. Butter, beer, iced-tea and *mugi-cha* or barley water, her favourite drink, were all deep in the cool water at the end of strings. There was even a separate string to pull up at the arrival of unexpected guests.

During the sultry dog-days, the heat made us give up all thought of work, and limit our exertions to eating and bathing. But although Haruko came from the mountains of Nikko where summers are cool, she did not seem to mind it. She would sing and laugh while she worked all day long in the kitchen. She showed such zeal in washing clothes that our shirts would invariably disappear as soon as they were off our backs.

But she had her troubles. One evening, as I smelled something burning, I found Haruko sitting in her room filled with smoke. She was calmly watching a little pile of punk burning on the back of her hand.

"It's an old Chinese medicine," she explained.

"I always burn some of it when I'm not feeling well."

"Do your parents know about it?"

"Oh, yes! When I am home, grandmother sometimes burns a little of the herb on the back of my neck. It is good for every kind of ailment."

Another time when she was filling the rice bowls at the evening meal she said ominously,

"I feel some change is going to happen to me."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because my *geta* thongs broke twice today. It is a sure sign, almost as bad as when you break your chopsticks at breakfast."

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As our house was within hearing distance of the sea, we often ran down for a morning dip, and felt sorry for Tokyoites who had to be content with their radio exercises. It was only May and we had the entire beach to ourselves; the invasion from Tokyo was not due till July. In the evening we would take walks along the shore, which on moonless nights was outlined by a long string of lights. When there was a moon the wide bay was like a silver disc. The Daibutsu in his natural background of pines and hills, was best under the brilliant stars. Then the uncertain light played about his features so that sometimes they almost seemed

to move.

Sometimes the weather, which had been sullen all day, would improve toward evening and invite us to stretch our legs. The sea then had the colour of iron, and appeared exceedingly clear-cut on the horizon in contrast to the strip of bright sky. Far off on the coast of Izu grew the thin band of light, diffuse like cream-coloured gauze. The mass of storm clouds that rested on the mountain tops gradually lifted and advanced over the bay. The milky band of light grew wider and wider as they sped on, then all at once this dark sea of cotton clouds was illuminated from underneath by a few long rays of the sun.

\* \* \*

Haruko knew how to provide our table with the cheapest fish and the best. She would go down to the beach at dusk, when the fishermen were returning after passing the day off Kamakura. We sometimes watched them come in. When their narrow-bowed craft reached shallow water, they would go about, to be hauled up stern first. A cable would be fixed to the stern, and several greased logs laid in the path of the keel. The fishermen's families wound up the cable by a windlass placed high on the beach. Mother would push a shaft, with her two boys, and even grand-

father turned around with the rest. The heavy boats moved up on the sands almost imperceptibly, their bows pointing toward the sea. Launching on the morrow would be an easier task.

At other times the fishermen would lay their nets near the shore and haul them in from the beach in the evening. Eight or ten would be pulling at one rope sometimes, singing in unison as they progressed inch by inch. The catch promised to be good. At last the net appeared, helped in by a breaking wave. The men would give a shout and jump in among the fish with spades. They filled one barrel after another, which were taken away on the bicycle trailer of the local fishmonger.

Other servants used to come down to the beach in the summer with their buckets to wait for the boats, and many were the cries of admiration at the silvery fish still full of life that were in the holds. The boats were often filled with sea-weed and tiny whitebait as well, destined to be dried in the sun and eaten by the fisher folk. Sometimes a few octopuses would be lifted out, their arms tightly wound round the fishermen's hands. To kill them, they were placed in a bucket and given a well-directed knife blow between the eyes.

Haruko was a good bargainer, and when she returned from these expeditions with twenty or thirty sen's worth of fine fish, we knew we would

be served nothing else for the next three or four days.

\* \* \*

I was once awakened in the dead of night by a light flashing through the window, and saw a figure groping his way around the side of the house. It was a man in puttees, an official of some kind, for he carried a long paper lantern with certain ideographs written on it. I jumped to the conclusion that there was a fire in the village, or maybe worse. What would anyone want with me past midnight, two hours after the whole countryside had gone to bed?

“What *banchi* is this? Isn't there a 1670?”

“Yes, this is the place, what do you want?”

“A special delivery for you.”

“Just a minute, and I'll get my seal.” But he assured me that a seal wasn't necessary. Now this was strange, as one always has to stamp a receipt for registered mail.

Before I could question him further, he was off as suddenly as he had come, his lantern trembling through the masses of trees.

It was an air-mail letter from New York.

How many people over there dropping a letter in the box for Japan stamped “Air Mail in USA” would ever dream that it could receive such con-

siderate treatment on its arrival? After leaving San Francisco, it deserves no better attention than ordinary mail, for it will not see another aeroplane. Yet some well-intentioned official in the Yokohama post-office stamps *KOKU* (Air-Way) in red on it, besides translating the address into Japanese script, for the local postman may not read English. And he, brave fellow, has to get out of bed to deliver it to me, for who knows that it is not an important letter, that should reach the addressee as soon as possible?

And he was not a young man, neither are the farmers and woodcutters one meets on the steep trails inland, labouring under enormous faggots for winter fuel. Though hard times have come, they always have a cheerful greeting for the foreigner who overtakes them. One old man broke out into contagious smiles when I asked him the way to Futagoyama.

“You’re on holiday today? With this clear weather you’ll have a fine view.”

The same old man was panting up the slippery needle-covered path when I came down, but found his breath to ask:

“Find the way all right? How was the view?” He seemed exceedingly pleased to know that a foreigner had noticed the beauty of his hills.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *On Fuji All Are Brothers*

MY chance to climb Mt. Fuji came quite unexpectedly. I was working in a Japanese news agency at the time, when one day my colleagues asked me to join them in the ascent. They immediately put me in the junior group, composed of those who had made the ascent once or twice. The senior class included members who made an annual race of it, their time being eight hours, a record once held by an Englishman. Many of my colleagues, including our president, belonged to the Association of Climbers of Mt. Fuji, of which one can remain a member only if he climbs the mountain every year. If they miss a year their membership is automatically cancelled, yet there are many in it of a ripe old age. Those too old to make the ascent on foot are carried up in a kind of primitive sedan chair, as this means of transportation is permitted by the laws of the Association. The oft-quoted Japanese proverb, "There are two kinds of fools, those who have never climbed Fuji, and those who have climbed it twice," does not apply to these



enthusiasts, who have climbed it not twice but maybe twenty times.

To the Japanese, Fuji-san stands for everything that is noble and pure. It is almost an object of worship, and even in the eyes of the old foreign resident it has about it something mystic and unreal. Sometimes a thin veil of mist hides the base, while only the snow-covered slopes appear as if detached from this earth, like a vision. One cannot often gaze on the majesty of its summit, for like Mt. Olympus, it is often encircled by a wreath of clouds. Compared to Mt. Blanc, Fuji is not a high mountain, yet it seems exceedingly high because it stands superbly alone and can be seen in one all-embracing glance.

From olden times, climbing Mt. Fuji has been an ascetic practice among Buddhist priests and pilgrims as well as followers of Shinto. Women were not allowed to tread the holy ground of the summit, and until the Imperial Restoration in 1868, were turned back after they were half way up. Now people of every faith and condition make the ascent annually. The first foreigner to go up was an Englishman, the British minister to Japan in 1860, and the wife of another British minister was the first woman.

Pilgrims climb Fuji today in greater numbers than ever, and these are joined by school-children,

sportsmen and middle-aged gentlemen, in all, about 50,000 people a year. The season is between July 1 and August 30.

Fuji is not an extinct volcano, only dormant. It erupted four times during seven centuries, and the last demonstration, in 1707, was particularly violent, rivalling Vesuvius of Roman days. For two months, with intermissions, day was turned into night, and Yedo, 70 miles away, was covered with several inches of ash. It was not without reason that the ancient Ainu called it "Fuji,"—the Goddess of Fire.

\* \* \*

Our president, who was a slower climber, left before us to be at the top before the contestants, in order to felicitate the first who arrived. Half of the staff would be absent from the office, but this was not exceptional even for a news agency, as many firms in Tokyo stop work for at least one day to make the annual climb.

A mountain train takes us to Gotemba, a town of inns near the foot of the mountain where pilgrims pass most of the night before starting on the long trail. They usually set out at one a.m., as they want to be in time for the sunrise which is best viewed from the eighth station, one hour from the summit.

\* \* \*

The contestants in the race wear shorts, khaki shirts, and on their backs thin mats of closely woven rushes for protection against the rain. From their belts hang extra pairs of straw sandals. Armed with staffs and electric lamps, they disappear at twelve o'clock in the dark tunnel of the forest trail. Their long climb through the night has begun.

We leave soon after at a leisurely pace, as we have ample time to reach the eighth station by sunrise. The trail we follow is a deep ravine that becomes a raging torrent in spring. It winds through the thick forest of pine and oak encircling the mountain in a belt from one to five miles wide. On either side of the dry torrent bed stand great trees with nearly all their roots exposed, while others have fallen, waiting to be carried down to the sea by the melted snows.

It is difficult going with the fine cinders underfoot, and we are glad to be well provided with the straw sandals that everyone wears. There is no moon, and the dense foliage even shuts out the starlight, as well as any breeze that might cool the sultry air and relieve the sense of mystery and oppression that pervade this dense forest. Then in a small clearing appears the first station, which should be passed quickly if one intends to reach the eighth in time for the sunrise, for here the

beer is cool and the harbours inviting. Indeed, climbing Mt. Fuji is a pilgrimage for foreigners and Japanese alike.

At last we are out of the forest, 7,000 feet high, and the regular line of Fuji's slope stands out black against a faintly luminous sky. The path that zigzags up through fields of clinkers, cinders, and long strips of lava is clearly outlined by the winking lamps of many pilgrims ahead.

A pale, grey light precedes the dawn, and we pause to look back on a sea of clouds that rarely breaks to reveal dark belts of forest land, and once what looked like a large grey pond, none other than lake Yamanaka at Fuji's base.

We overtake our pilgrims, whose lights we have been following in the night. They look ghostly in their white tunics and gaiters, and the broad straw hats shaped like miniature Fuji. But the clusters of small bells hanging at their belts jingle pleasantly. Some very old faces peer out at us, so old that one wonders whether they will reach the summit this year as in years past. Can they climb their 1,000 feet a day, which is the minimum distance between stations? Yet they trudge on patiently, muttering over and over to themselves the Buddhist prayer, *Rokkon shojo! Rokkon shojo!* "May our six senses be pure!" referring to the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart.

FUJI FROM AN INN AT MITO





Sometimes we also hear *O yama wa seiten!* "Fine weather on the Honourable Mountain!" a prayer much needed now, for the weather looks far from promising to amateur photographers and worshippers of the morning sun. The clouds close round the mountain more thickly than ever, and we feel marooned on an island in the immensity of space.

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Beyond the sixth station comes the real test; great blocks of lava bar the path. Then our trail crosses the "Midway Circling Path," that girdles the mountain for twenty miles. It would be pleasant following it, and looking down on five provinces.

Finally appear the grey lava walls of the eighth station, towering like a fortress in a level space cut out of the mountain side, 10,000 feet high. It is a kind of village of low huts with corrugated iron roofs weighted down with rocks. Here one finds a meteorological observatory, an infirmary, a telephone bureau, and a post office where outgoing letters are obliterated with a special stamp. But what attracts us most right now is the inn, a large common-room with a raised floor covered with straw matting, nearly every inch of which is occupied by sleeping climbers buried under thick quilts.

We walk cautiously over them, looking for a clear spot, and fortunately find room near the kitchen, where we are served with alacrity. The variety of food at this altitude is rather limited. In fact there are only two dishes on the menu: flat noodles swimming in steaming soup, and *amazaké*, a drink made of barley and water, with a little sugar. Like kings we order everything.

Gradually there is a stirring of recumbent forms, and soon everybody is up and out, facing the east. Pilgrims in white hold their rosaries, arms are outstretched, hands are clapped together and bared heads are bowing, for now over the moving tide of clouds appears the red disc of the sun. But there is no view for us of the sun's rays lighting up a great part of Japan at once, striking the files of peaks and ranges below and shining on the countless isles in the Pacific. Only golden red light floods the immensity of clouds and sky. We are alone on an island; there are no other shores on this crimson sea. And just as suddenly a fierce wind strikes us, and billows of black clouds, caught in a vortex, form before our eyes one ring upon another in a gigantic cone, exactly like an inverted Fuji. Then mist and stinging rain beat down upon us from behind, blotting out everything.

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Tying our straw raincoats more securely about us, we set out in gusts of wind and showers of fine rain, hoping to reach the summit before the weather becomes worse. The way is steeper and narrower at every step, and strewn with worn-out sandals. We are always looking up, expecting to come within sight of the goal after every turn, but cannot see more than ten feet away, being blinded by wind and rain. Pilgrims come rushing down, blundering into us, with the wind at their backs, crying out encouragingly as they pass: "*Mo jiki des'!*" (You're almost there!) This warms our hearts, if not our ears, and the more difficult the way becomes, the more intimately do we feel the common bond of brotherhood.

Near the top we are obliged to keep low, creeping along on all fours in places; one old fellow who did not act with precaution was blown off the trail. He rolled for fifty yards down the steep cinder slope, but was picked up more surprised than hurt. The last few yards are the slowest. The way is crowded now with climbers, and we must await our turn before making a dash across a gap in the lava wall on the edge of the crater lip. A furious gale is blowing across it, and each man must watch for a short lull in which to cross to safety and the goal.

We are on the top of Japan, groping our way

along a kind of road lined with rest-houses built in the crater wall. With their roofs so well covered with rocks that they seem to form part of the mountain, and solid walls broken only by low doors, they look more like dugouts.

There is a small shrine on the summit, a weather-beaten structure crowded now with pilgrims offering up prayers for a safe return. Two or three white-robed priests beside a kind of forge are busily burning the seal of the shrine in the walking sticks of the pilgrims, to show that they have been to the top.

Wet through and shivering, we finally reach the hut flying the flag of our company. It is crowded, almost pitch dark, and the air is filled with smoke, but it is warmer than outside. The shouts of welcome from our colleagues within who had left us last night at Umagaeshi were more comforting than brandy. Although they pack the floor, our friends make room for us somehow under the warm dampness of the thick quilts, and vigorously pound our backs as a massage.

When all our staff are present, the president makes a short address thanking us for coming, and hoping that we will always be as united in spirit as we are this morning united in the common test of climbing Mt. Fuji. The winners of the race receive prizes, and we make the low-ceilinged

shelter ring with the song of the company before separating.

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The wind still rages on Fuji's summit. Terrific blasts shake the hut to its foundations, like mountainous waves striking against a ship. The very ground trembles. It is useless to venture out and make the circuit of the crater, with huge rocks and loose boulders towering in places a hundred feet above the edge. We may be struck by flying rocks or dashed down the 500-foot deep crater. In the driving rain, we could never see the wisps of steam that come up through cracks in the lava, or warm our hands by holding them a minute against the rocks.

With the wind at our backs, it is as perilous going down the trail as it was coming up. After we have passed the eighth station, however, the sun comes out to cheer us up. We leave the path, and descend in long, sliding strides through loose cinders and ashes, into which we sink up to our ankles. Our last pairs of sandals are worn thin, and a fierce appetite presses us onward, down to civilization. The mountain is in a smiling mood now, and we pass a laughing group of school-girls on their way up.

At Gotemba the evening paper informed us

that the worst storm in ten years had broken on Fuji, with a wind of 60 kilometres per hour.

“Better luck next time!” said my colleagues as we parted in Tokyo Station. And I decided to go up with them again, to feast my eyes on that grand panorama, denied me the first time. If I didn’t go after all, I could always quote the old proverb.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Kyoto: An Unconventional Tour*

KYOTO'S past splendour awakens from its winter sleep in the Cherry Blossom Dance, and begins the spring with the traditional Aoi Festival. In summer one finds the imperial city bubbling over with gayety when Gion Matsuri holds sway, and later when the maple leaves are red, its surrounding hills echo with the singing populace. But what of Kyoto in the off-season, Kyoto in every-day garb?

I saw only the normal Kyoto without its tourists and guides and student-interpreters. Nijo Palace and Chion-in, Ginkaku-ji and Kinkaku-ji, Kiyomizu and Teapot Lane, are still only names to me, awaiting my visit on a future expedition.

After the austere simplicity of Ise's Grand Shrines, which I had visited before coming to Kyoto, the ornate styles of Buddhist temples and pavilions seemed too artificial. Perhaps it is well to see Kyoto first, and the well-ordered beauty of Nara Park, before making the pilgrimage to the august shrine of the Imperial Ancestors. There is no deliberate artlessness in Ise's grounds; it is just a

piece of country left as it was found, but tended with extraordinary care.

From Ise-Yamada to the Inner Shrine one drives toward the interior among the hills over a smooth road reminding one in parts of a certain avenue in the Paris *Bois*. So well-kept are its green banks and the bits of forest it cuts through, that for a while I wondered how a bus could be allowed to enter what I thought were private grounds.

The Inner Shrine of Ise stands at the top of a gently sloped cup, surrounded by hills of centenarian forests. Down through this valley flows under dense verdure a swift, broad stream of waters clear and undefiled. Quiet, well-dressed crowds in threes and fours cross the classic arched bridge, pass under the two wooden *torii* and gather along the torrent's flag-stoned bank where it appears rounding a bend out of the trees. There young and old perform their ablutions in the icy water before further penetrating these sacred grounds. They were not the noisy, care-free crowds of Nikko. Theirs was a kind of reverential happiness.

The gravel path climbs among gigantic cypress and cryptomeria growing in natural disorder among oak and other trees. As one nears the Holy of Holies, the only audible sounds are the rustling leaves catching the sunlight and the pebbles rolling

in the stream; the very birds seem to chirp in hushed tones. Then the way steepens, winding under a high rocky wall overgrown with moss of centuries, atop which runs a simple grey fence of unpainted cypress.

Before the steep stairway, immobile among the whispering leafery, is a regiment of infantry forming a double line of khaki all along the steps, from the path to the mossy eaves of the shrine's thatched roof. At the top step stands the commander, offering up the prayers of his regiment to the Ancestors of all the Emperors. Below swarm the crowds, silent and humble, men with their hat in hand, women clapping or throwing coins, scarce looking up as they pass below the steps, where stand white-robed priests and guardians of the law.

It was with this picture in my memory that I boarded a noisome street car in Kyoto bound for the Mountain of Storms—Arashiyama. The very sound of the word was sufficient to induce me. After a short walk to the nearest hills surrounding old Kyoto, the famous view is suddenly revealed: a long, wooden bridge gracefully spanning the river on its slender foundation piles. Behind the steep hill, Arashiyama is still in summer green.

A crowd was standing near the end of the bridge, intently leaning over the edge, as if some tragedy had happened there. I looked over anx-

iously to see the felling of a giant pine, once a proud tree, its branches now withered and without needles. Already the massive crutch that had assisted it in its old age was sawn away: I would witness the tree's last hour. The woodman had already cut through more than half the trunk of immense girth, but still the tree stood firm.

"It certainly does cling to life," commented a kindly spectator, as the woodman hammered his wedges in deeper. Then more sawing, and more hammering.

"I saw it move!" cried a boy, but nothing happened.

"Better keep away from the railing, it might fall this way!" yelled another spectator. The man with the saw went around between the river and the leaning tree.

"Take care you don't go in too!" a student jokingly remarked, as the man in blue coat lingered for breathless moments there to inspect the cut.

"He can't saw," began a student, and then the tree fell with a great and drenching splash. Water rose higher than the bridge, a fitting end for so fine a tree. The woodman gathered up his tools and wedges and calmly walked off, and the massive trunk among broken branches was carried downstream, into the jaws of buzzing saw-mills. From now on it will be seen only on picture postcards.



The river above the bridge is as wide as a city park lake, as a dam has been built across it. Its mirrored surface invited me to row. Beside a fleet of massive flat-bottomed *Yakatabune* with matted decks and steep-sloping roofs, I boarded a prosaic rowboat. A few students had the same idea, and soon questions shot across the water such as "What is your country?" or "Do you speak English?" and had I chosen, I would have had some friendly interpreter-guide to conduct me round the thousand and one temples of Kyoto.

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Kyoto's downtown quarter rivals if not surpasses in modernism the busiest streets of Tokyo. Wide avenues cross each other at right angles and cut the city up into regular blocks, the result of wise city planning by one of Japan's earliest emperors. And though Kyoto is many centuries older than the eastern capital, unlike the latter it did not grow from agglomerations of villages scattered in haphazard fashion round a feudal keep, thus making road planning with a ruler an impossibility. After walking the previous evening down Nagoya's most animated street, which reminded me of the vicinity of Ueno station, cluttered up as it was with fortune tellers' booths and open-air eating houses, I found a quiet refinement about those of Kyoto. Here even the ultra-modern clashes quietly with the old.

Kyoto at the beginning of autumn is a city without dust and little noise, although the streets are lively. This oldest of the Empire's four big cities is often startling in its modernity. In surface transportation it is ahead of them all with its smooth-running electric buses; the very tramcars try to be quiet. There is also something gentle about Kyoto; an atmosphere of good taste seems to pervade it wherever one goes. Graceful new buildings, department stores, coffee-houses and news-reel theatres jostle in friendly manner with tile-roofed shops, little art shops filled with lacquer ware, porcelain and brocades which only the artisan of Kyoto can produce.

The artistic temperament of the inhabitants was infused warm life into the cold and impersonal the *nouveau* of Western Europe and made it human.

Modern tones and age-old motifs are discreetly juxtaposed in its bare surfaces. The young man for his town seems to take this modernism seriously. In the stream-lined coffee-house no loud *trasshaimase* greets the customer, and no gramophone twangs with *samisen* or sentimental song. One felt almost uneasy, as if there were some impending calamity, so marked was the quiet there. After the frank noisiness of the Yedokko, these students in kimono and bare feet in *geta* seemed grave and soft-spoken.

The dulcet speech of Kyoto, as clear and musical as a bell! Even the bus girls speak softly, avoiding the high-pitched tones of their Tokyo sisters. For the student of Japanese, what could be better than learning the language one hears in the old imperial capital? Kyoto is the Tours of Japan; even the man on the street speaks with the same purity and harmony that characterizes the French of Tours, where Americans flock to enter that famous university. If I could begin my Japanese studies all over again, I would spend my first year at least in gentle Kyoto. Where else can one receive better all-round first impressions of Japan, where the new blends with the refinement of the city's past?

In old Kyoto, that island of commercial quarters rarely penetrated by the visitor,—if only for the reason that it is impassable to automobiles, one finds street life much the same as in the past. Exceptions are made for the countless bicycles that dart about in frightening manner among romping children and bean curd vendors. Row upon row of massively built shops line the streets, so uniform that it is difficult to tell one from another. Their heavily tiled roofs all slant at the same angle, with overhanging eaves shading grilled windows, sombre exteriors and still darker interiors. Merchants in the little changed dress of centuries ago, black

*haori*, black *tabi*, and kimono of dark or neutral shades, go silently about, pale under their well-combed black hair.

Although Kyoto clings with greater tenacity than other cities to its past dreams of imperial glory, it also welcomes the most modern influences. An extraordinary spectacle was the programme at the Takarazuka theatre by a troupe of about thirty girls. True, the first actress ever to appear on the boards in Japan was O-Kuni, in Kyoto, 300 years ago, and she enjoyed the patronage of the shogun. But that was only of short duration, women afterward being forbidden to appear on the stage down to comparatively recent times. But who in Kyoto even dreamed that they would return to the stage as chorus girls?

From the moment the curtain went up and nearly two solid hours they gave an ever-joking programme full of gayety and original for its. But the scene that remains most vivid in my mind was the first. Imagine a perfectly organized orchestra of feminine musicians in white robes, all between fifteen and eighteen years old! There were only two or three male artists, besides the conductor who led the Takarazuka symphony orchestra in the difficult *Toréador* overture of Bizet's *Carmen*. It was an astonishing sight, this orchestra of Japanese girlhood with bobbed hair.

If the playing was not brilliant, it was far above the average. But although spectators applauded, there was no *encore*, which would not have been out of place. True, Bizet would not have been satisfied with the performance. But had he seen those girls of tender years with earnest faces over their violins, on the 100th anniversary of his birth, he would probably have smiled indulgently.

What makes Kyoto such a pleasant place to live in is the knowledge that as soon as you become tired of modernism there are mountains all round where one may escape. For the country begins right outside the city limits; the hills form the backdrop of every street. And at dusk when lights twinkle down on Kyoto like early stars, these mountains loom up amazingly near. Lights of Hiei-zan, the one time stronghold of the warrior-priests with their long history of rivalries and intrigue. A most unromantic way to go up Mt. Hiei is by cable-car, as it does not fit in with the temples and white-clad pilgrims, but if the warrior-priests could return to-day, they would certainly be in favour of this invention, for the climb on foot is not a promenade.

One should not object to the incongruity of cable-cars if only for the reason that one day it permitted a jolly party of venerable ladies to reach the top and revisit the playground of their youth. And so long ago that was that they took the pre-

caution of wearing yellow cockades in their hair to distinguish them from the crowds, so that no one might become separated.

On the same car was a group of countrymen from some distant province, who gave expression to many exclamations of wonder as we climbed, and the valleys with towns and shreds of forest-land slowly unfolded below. Suddenly one who was the leader raised his voice and enjoined the party to keep a minute of silence with bared heads. The souls of many heroes were being enshrined in Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine this very minute. And although we were packed in so tight that it was nearly impossible to reach for one's hat, faces were lowered and eyes closed right willingly.

One is still conscious on Mt. Hiei today of the power of the warrior-monks who were finally broken by the mighty Nobunaga. Like Carthage these enemies of the state had to be destroyed if peace was ever to return. And like that African city Mt. Hiei never recovered from the blow. Many new temples stand out among the cryptomeria, it is true, built long after the great fire. But of the past those grave forests yield little more than a few stone monuments reading, "On this spot once stood. . ." or "The precincts of the monastery began here. . ."

What magnificent playgrounds the people of



OUTSKIRTS OF KYOTO





Kyoto now have at their elbow! From the summit of the mountain there is a choice of views. To the south is Kyoto, spread out in orderly fashion in the plain, with the turbulent Kamogawa cutting across from north to south, losing itself in the mist as it meanders lazily down to the sea. There is also the complicated structure of green hills and sombre valleys between Kyoto and Otsu, and finally, to the north, the glassy surface of Lake Biwa. This last view had the old ladies chosen as they ate their rice and pickles and gossiped about the past.

## CHAPTER XV

### *In the Mountains of Nagano*

NAGANO station is a XXth century temple dedicated to the god of steam transportation, a monument to the iron rail that made old-world Nagano a modern city. The station-master invited me to admire the roof, modelled after that of the Zenkoji temple, the centre of the religious life of the city. In front of the station stands a fountain surmounted by a graceful bronze Kwannon, long hidden in the gloom of Zenkoji and now outlined against the background of Asahi-yama.

Nagano is a silk manufacturing centre, but with its forty or more temples and temple-inns, it attracts pilgrims from afar. We got an idea what it was like to be one when the maid awakened us at five next morning and bowed us into a taxi at five-twenty. The high street that runs for a mile or two straight up to the temple was already filled with pilgrims. At the first of the two outer gates, flanked by massive Deva kings very much alive, we looked back to see Nagano below and the mountains slowly lighting up.

At this hour the temple was already crowded :

the first service had begun at five and another one would soon follow. A priest in green robes found us an open space on the matted floor. We sat on our heels among pupils of an engineering school and an old ladies' association, and watched the pigeons flying in and out through the wide space before the altar.

Zenkoji is a Buddhist temple that represents both the Shingon and the Tendai sects. The lines of its roof also show Shinto elements. And the reason why it continues to enjoy such prosperity is that women are welcomed there.

Three priests sat on either side of the altar, separated from the worshippers by a low railing. They began chanting sutras while a seventh priest beat a drum, at first with a long pause between each beat, imperceptibly decreasing until it became a rapid staccato. Then the head priestess appeared, the only nun in Japan of the Imperial blood. The drums were silenced and a gong was struck as she rose from her knees beside the altar and faced the people, palms joined and eyes under her shaven brows looking off into nothingness.

*"Namu-ami-da-butsu!"* Ten times she repeated the mystic formula, lips scarcely moving and features as impassible as a Buddha, and after the tenth time the gold curtain of the altar was slowly raised. Behind the numerous paper lanterns, lamps

of bronze and trembling naked candles was the holy of holies, bathed in a diffuse light of gold. This was the climax of the service, the moment everyone had been awaiting, an event repeated at this same hour every morning of the year. Twenty minutes later the temple was empty, and the faithful lined the flag-stoned path to catch a passing glimpse at the nun and her subordinate priests.

She came under a scarlet parasol held by a neophyte behind her, walking gravely down the steps, as if in meditation still. The kneeling populace along the way received her blessing as she touched each head with scarlet tassels hanging from her robes.



The best artists in Nagano had designed and decorated our inn. On the sliding doors of the special suite, an artist had painted waves in the conventional manner, when he saw the garden lacked a pond. For water is one of the three essential elements in landscape gardening. Our host was particularly proud of the panels between these rooms, wood carvings by a living descendant of "Left-handed" Jingoro who created the famous three monkeys that speak, hear and see no evil.

"The motifs are significant to the business of inn-keeping!" chuckled the proprietor. "On one

side, we have swallows; on the other, geese. As you know, the geese come when the swallows depart, and vice-versa. Thus did my sculptor friend wish me a constant stream of guests!"

His first guest of honour was Prince Kan-in. General Nogi also stopped in these rooms, and there is a pine tree he planted in the garden. Behind the trees rises Asahi-yama, a one-time stronghold which played a part in several battles when Nobunaga was fighting for the unity of the country.

Our host was anxious to show us into his go-down, a veritable treasure house with a heavy tiled roof and whitewashed walls. The collection it contained was entirely devoted to Zozan, one of Nagano's greatest men. Born of a samurai family in 1811, he later adopted the name Zozan, which means Elephant Mountain, from a hill near his house that looks very much like a recumbent elephant. He was of an extremely studious disposition, and became one of the most brilliant minds of pre-Meiji days. By mastering Dutch, the only foreign tongue besides Chinese that one could learn then, he familiarized himself with many aspects of Western science long before any of his countrymen. Zozan was a radical, and a man born ahead of his time. He later was a strong supporter of the movement for the restoration of the Imperial rule. In the meantime he became

interested in artillery and mastered the science of ballistics.

But Zozan had many enemies, especially the national radicals. He was imprisoned when he was found to be involved in a plot by Yoshida Shoin, a follower of his, and was later stabbed to death while riding through the streets of Kyoto, at the age of forty-five.

We saw the red saddle that covered his snow-white steed on that fateful day, hanging now in the white *kura* of the inn-keeper. There was also Zozan's library, including many old Dutch books on the art of war, filled with notes and frequently underlined. One of the most interesting exhibits was an old note-book, its yellowed pages covered with Zozan's compact and regular writing in the Dutch language. It contains whole chapters he copied from borrowed books which he had soon to return to their owners. Neither did Zozan neglect the classics, for he became famous in the art of calligraphy, almost every inn in the province claiming to own a scroll in his hand. "Yes," beamed our host, suddenly breaking out into English, "he was a self-made man."

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The drive up out of Nagano to the land of legends in Togakushi is a succession of quiet val-

leys and rice fields with neat groups of thatched roofs on the edge of streams. Mountains form the background of every view, with patches of snow lingering in narrow clefts. In these dark valleys which they encircle, shutting out the rumblings of civilization, legends are real. It is the land of those religious ascetics the *yamabushi*, and the shrines which are their places of pilgrimage keep alive the oldest legend in Japan.

The three shrines of Togakushi are all situated in the vicinity of a village of inns called Chusha or Middle Shrine. There we would pass the night. After crossing the azalea carpet of Iizuna plateau, 1,000 metres above the sea, where every pond and birch grove is an invitation to camp, we came to the Hokosha, or "Shrine of the Resplendent Treasures." It stands at the top of a flight of moss-covered steps flanked by cryptomeria that climbs steeply up the mountain side.

Chusha, at the end of the village road, has a similar approach. There in the discoloured building with sculptured façade, that is covered with straw during the season of snows, we witnessed an age-old dance. It is the dance of the goddess Uzumé before the cave of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess and ancestress of all Japan. She had a quarrel with her brother, and retired into the cave, thus depriving the other gods of light.

Before the altar was placed a crude painting like a piece of stage scenery, representing Ama-no-Iwato, the Rock Door of the Heavenly Cave. From the gloomy depth of the temple there soon rose the sounds of drum, flutes, wooden clappers and *sho*, or primitive wind organ.

First four priests in white robes danced behind masks, some of the latter being so old that the whiskers had fallen out. Then the little girls that had peered out of their quarters at us in amusement some time before, mingled with the priests to dance in white and scarlet dress and painted faces, waving bells and fans and willow wands.

Silent but appreciative villagers watched them for nearly an hour. There are only two other places in Japan where *kagura* may be seen, at Nara and the Grand Shrine of Ise, but Togakushi is the very country of the cave. The mirthful goddess Uzumé danced so comically that Amaterasu forgot her mischievous brother and came out to light the world once more. You may see the boulder that was rolled in front of the cave by Ame-no-tajikarao-no-mikoto—only a god could have such a name—to prevent the Sun Goddess from ever entering it again. It is almost a mountain itself, so that one may easily imagine how great was the god with the long name.

Kambara Ryokan of sonorous tones sheltered



us for the night. But not before we had visited Okusha, the Inner Shrine, where the hero-god who stopped up the Heavenly Cave is enshrined. It was somewhere up in those saw-toothed mountains that we could see from the balcony of our window; perhaps it was still covered with the persistent snows in their shadows.

On the edge of the road in the woods rose a solitary *torii* and a great rock standing on end bearing the two ideographs for "Dismount." This applied to automobiles of today as much as it did to the horsemen of the past, for our driver left us there to continue on foot. The narrow path led through the forest straight to the mountains. It was a quiet, dark forest that reminded one of Fontainebleau with its gurgling brooks running invisible among the boulders and the spongy humus. At times a wild pigeon would break the silence, or a woodpecker knocking sharply among the leafery. We passed under a gateway, guarded by two personages seated in their gloomy cage-like boxes on either side. Then the path narrowed, and was lined by old cryptomeria that interweaved their roots under-foot.

Okusha was a temple of modest appearance, built in a recess cut out of the mountain, its once vivid colours faded by the weather.

"You are some of the first people to visit us

this year," said the old Shinto priest who showed us with pride the effigy of a white horse formerly used in processions. He then insisted we should stop in his house before returning. It was a one-storeyed building, very solid-looking to resist the snow. Almost half of it was hidden under the side of the mountain, and the front looked out over the trees on the plateau.

My head nearly struck the low ceiling on entering, with its rafters as black as pitch from the smoke of many winter fires. We were led through one room where an old man was squatting beside an open fire in a square pit, over which was suspended a simmering kettle. The flames flared up as we entered, enough to show an enormous thermometer on a pillar.

The guest room was open on three sides with views of the Japan Alps, the ski slope of Sugadaira, and Mt. Asama with its tuft of smoke. Our host served us steaming green tea, and apologized for the poor visibility, for even Mt. Fuji could be seen from this mountain retreat.

We could not leave before he had written out a charm for each of us, square papers bearing the red seal of the shrine and the date as proof of our pilgrimage. Dusk fell on our path between the cryptomeria, and the old gateway in the middle of the forest looked like a piece of stage scenery

in the thickening mist. Night fell before we reached the village, and our inn-keeper sent two of his servants to meet us half way with *kasa* and lighted lanterns.

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Down in the plain of Kashiwabara, where Ninokura's village street echoes with the incessant ring of blacksmiths' forges, stands one of the most famous godowns in all Japan. It is only a forlorn structure of mud and straw, quite empty. Its walls look as if they were covered with scabs where the plaster has fallen away.

But this is the godown of the poet Issa, who with Basho before him exhausted the possibilities of *haiku*. Here he passed the last days of his life, a great man with a heart as simple as this windowless shelter. Like Basho, Issa led a wanderer's life ever since he first set out on foot for Yedo. He was only fourteen years old. For more than thirty-five years after that, he travelled up and down Japan, often without a sen in his kimono sleeves. He preferred the company of birds and insects to that of his step-mother and half-brother back home. With poetry he soothed his soul.

Issa loved all creatures without distinction: cats and mice, fleas and lizards. His poems, mostly in native Shinshu dialect, are often comic and satirical, but they show sympathy for the weak, both men

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and dumb animals. At fifty he came home, a famous poet, but still a man of the soil uninfluenced by sudden riches. Taking up his abode in a plain thatch-roofed cottage in Ninokura, he decided to retire, and married two years later.

Then a fire raged through the village and destroyed Issa's cottage, upon which he moved into his nearby godown which had escaped the flames. The disaster merely kindled his poetic vein, and resulted in a *haiku* to his little friends the fleas:

"In the smoking earth  
The fleas hop and swarm with joy."

Issa outlived the loss of his cottage by only five months, dying at the age of sixty-five. According to his wishes, no tombstone was erected. He was buried side by side with his parents in the village cemetery. It is only recently, in 1927, that admirers built a shrine near his grave, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his death.

Issa's only living descendant in Ninokura is his great-grandson. We found his house at a stone's throw from the poet's old godown. He is a farmer who does a small business selling, on the side, books and postcards concerning his illustrious ancestor. He even quoted with a grin one or two of Issa's poems. "He is certainly no poet himself!" remarked our Japanese travelling companion.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *Hospitable Sado Isle*

*"Sado e, Sado e to kusa ki mo nabiku  
Sado wa i yoi ka, sumi yoi ka."*

THE high mountains of old Echigo province faded slowly into the mist with the mainland as the Okésa Maru, 500 tons' burden, steamed across the Japan Sea.

"We'll be in Sado in two hours and a half," said my host, the owner of the trim little ship, and a man who knows Sado island like the palm of his hand.

We stood on the fore-deck and watched the isle of fabled riches slowly reveal its snow peaks in the pale sky. At first, with their lower slopes still invisible, they could have been taken for a long row of clouds.

"There is reason to believe that formerly they were two islands, separated by a swamp," he explained. "Sado is the Ainu term for swamp."

As we approached under the lee of the island, the sea became more and more unruffled. After passing the pine-covered isle of Dragon King and the lighthouse of Princess Point, the harbour was as calm as glass.

We had a lunch of sea delicacies, overlooking Lake Kamo, before setting out on a voyage round the island. Our native craft equipped with an engine, carried enough fuel, warm kimono, food and beer for a day's trip. The best part of the ship was the after deck, where we sat, with our backs to the engine-house. Shoes were removed and stored in the hold, for the deck was covered with mats. There were even cushions.

The four men that composed the crew were a rough-looking lot, with deeply-lined faces and close-shaven heads tied up in kerchiefs. At first glance they might have been mistaken for pirates, if their respectful manners had not soon betrayed an inner kindness.

The north-eastern coast of Sado reminded me at times of the shores of Lake Geneva. The majesty of the Jura range in Savoy was here in the long snow-covered mountains that formed the back-bone of the island. But when we approached the coast, near enough to see thick groves of bamboo covering the hills, the illusion of Lake Geneva vanished.

Fishing villages lined this coast almost without interruption, with roofs weighed down by stones to withstand the winter gales. A characteristic of these agglomerations was the community boat-house, large sheds on the edge of the water.

Fifteen in a row I counted in one village.

"That village was Black Princess; we shall soon pass Peaceful Tree," said the man at the bow. "That grey bit of land ahead of us is Jewel Cape." He seemed pleased to be able to instruct us in some points of Sado's topography.

"At Horse's Head there is a valley where one finds the most perfect cherry blossoms on the island," he continued expansively. "And I never saw such crimson maples in my life."

After passing Wakizaki, the last cape but one before rounding the northern extremity of the island, the breeze freshened.

"Probably have a little weather," tersely commented the man at the wheel. A make-shift curtain of sail-cloth was rigged up on the starboard side to protect us from anticipated waves.

Rounding Great Sado, we skirted close by a desolate headland with a solitary lighthouse. In a small bay were a dozen grey roofs huddled under a cliff barren of all vegetation save for a thin sward of green. This was the most isolated village in all Sado. Ahead could be distinguished a long, low-lying island through the salty mist. Or was it a ship? On coming nearer they were two islets.

"Futatsu-game-jima!" (Two Turtles Islands) shouted the man at the bow, between waves. "See those reefs barely above water where the waves are



breaking? A ship went down there with all hands. That was before the lighthouse was built."

Our craft steered safely through the ugly rocks in question. Cormorants had made their nests on some of the most inaccessible ones, white with guano. Now and then these birds would fly low over the water, or wait patiently to fill their long, hooked bills, as they rested on the bobbing floats of fishing nets.

One minute our boat would tremble from bow to stern from the blow of a mountainous wave, and in another would stagger into the trough like an aeroplane in an air-pocket.

"It is not going to be easy to pour the beer!" remarked my fellow-traveller, who after this understatement nearly lost his hat. Waves were bursting over the bow, and at each one we would automatically duck and hold on.

"Unusual wind for this time of the year!" bellowed the man at the helm.

But they didn't seem to think it was very rough. In fact several natives were seen out in flat-bottomed craft no larger than row-boats. They were at anchor near jagged rocks, rhythmically sinking out of sight and riding the crest of the waves quite indifferently. Their occupants were paying no attention to what was going on above the surface, as they were leaning out of their boats with their

heads stuck in buckets with glass bottoms. They were exploring the rocks under water for shell-fish, which they pried loose with a hooked stick.

The sun went down quickly and the head wind subsided somewhat, but we were still far from our destination. The lookout at the bow who was scanning the coast, suddenly cried out:

“*Ami da! Ami da!*” (Nets ahead!) The engine was immediately slowed down and the vessel veered sharply to port. On our starboard, very close, were the familiar logs that held up the vast nets, stretching in a long interrupted line. They were connected by a rope that might easily have caused some trouble to the propellor. After this narrow escape, the crew all laughed at having been caught napping.

On rounding in darkness a point outlined by the white foam at its base, we found a semi-circle of lights winking at us in friendly manner. It was Koda. On coming closer we distinguished a lantern, swinging back and forth, no doubt to assist our pilot. We advanced cautiously into the bay, on the look-out for reefs, and stopped a few hundred feet off shore. A small boat came out to meet us, manned by two old fishermen. After a casual farewell, our crew very soon put out to sea without more ado.

“Where are they going to pass the night?” I asked.

"At Ryotsu, which they probably won't reach until after midnight," answered my host. "They take their boat back there."

Nearly all the town-folk of "Little Fields" holding paper lanterns greeted us at our landing on the shore.

"The village headman has invited us to his home," whispered my companion. "We cannot refuse."

We followed our grey-bearded host up the path through his garden. Lining both sides of the way were the authorities and chief personages of Koda, most of whom my fellow-traveller knew very well. "The school-teacher,"—"The postmaster." Introductions were brief and bows rapid.

After the usual protestations of being unworthy to occupy it, we finally gave in to our host and sat in the place of honour before the *tokonoma*. One man after another entered the vast 20-mat room in fine native style, and seated himself on the cushions disposed along three sides. I recognized the postmaster and the school-teacher among them. We became the object of polite gazes. Visitors didn't often come to Koda, especially not at night by boat. Besides, they had been awaiting our arrival for several hours.

A slender young girl entered, the host's daughter. After a graceful bow to the company, she

offered us steaming tea in covered cups, accompanied by Japanese sweetmeats. Soon after this she brought us English tea with milk and sugar. Finally came beer and saké, several bottles of the latter going round the room. Questions began to fly, and we gave an account of our voyage.

Then our amiable host produced two white square pasteboards with gilt edges, rubbed some ink on an ink-stone, and handed my friend a new brush just dipped in it.

"We must write a thought or poem as souvenir," whispered my companion while he bowed and accepted the proffered brush. I regretted spoiling an immaculate sheet with clumsy writing, but my host did me the honour of insisting.

In the meantime, his daughter kept bringing in one dish after another, now a Japanese delicacy, now a Western-style preparation, until we were surrounded with food that it would take more than two very hungry travelers to eat.

Some preparations were going on outside.

"There will be dancing," opined my friend.

We were soon all invited to follow our host into the great entrance hall, where we sat, like on a dais, facing the door and the garden below. A furious rythm of drums heralded the approach of the dancers. Out of the dark, brilliant paper lanterns swinging from the end of poles appeared

over the fence. Then the youths who bore them were revealed when they entered the gate, followed by most of the children of Koda. The large drum was suspended from a kind of litter carried by two lads with towels rolled round their heads. Two other youths beat it continuously but rythmically as they performed a comic dance alongside.

A maiden carrying a basket entered, dancing to the music of a smaller drum and a flute coming from behind a cloth painting held up by two boys for a background. She was gathering flowers by the roadside, when a figure enveloped in a green robe and with the head of a dragon approached her fiercely.

"This is the dance of Honen, the Buddhist saint," said a voice in my ear. In the semi-darkness I recognized the school-teacher. "It is performed every year in July by our people; but tonight is a special performance."

The dragon danced menacingly, and was about to attack the maiden, when a youth with a sword came to her rescue and finally defeated the monster.

"It is an allegory," went on my school-teacher friend. "The maiden represents innocence, the youth the power of good in Buddha, and the dragon that of evil."

No sooner had this performance come to an

end than we were pressed to witness another country entertainment. It was a kind of primitive puppet show, and quite an event in this island which has never seen the cinema. The audience was already there, old men with their pipes, servants carrying babies, students and young girls, all deeply absorbed in the play. Atop a long screen of cloth, a samurai and a richly dressed lady were conversing. Their manipulator was hidden behind, as well as the story-teller who sang to the accompaniment of a *biwa*, a kind of lute.

At last we took leave of our many friends and our host the headman, driving off amid many bows to Aikawa fifteen miles down the coast. Several sleeping villages we passed, and we gradually began to feel quite sleepy ourselves in the balmy night air. Our driver actually dozed off, just long enough for the two right wheels to go over the edge of the embankment, to which the taxi now clung, almost lying on its side. His subsequent activity, however, amply made up for his moment of weakness. While we were thinking with no enthusiasm of walking on to Aikawa, nearly all the inhabitants of the nearest village had been roused by our chauffeur. The fishermen cheerfully gave up all thought of further rest that night and set to work with ropes and levers. With cries of encouragement and singing in chorus as

when they hauled up their boats, they finally set the cab up on the road again. Among them I shall never forget one old woman nearly bent double, who insisted on doing her share of work in the middle of that night by the light of the moon.

They had almost despaired of our arrival at the Izumo-ya Inn, when we came limping in with smashed fenders and running board. But a hot bath was still awaiting us, and a midnight repast in our rooms.

Sado, I learned, played a rather tragic part in the history of Japan, as it served as a place of exile for several great men who for political or religious reasons, were compelled to pass the rest of their days here. As we were driving along a fine white beach next day, my host pointed inland to the foothills. "Not far from here stands among tall black pines a monument to an exiled emperor, Juntoku Tenno, who attempted to overthrow the Kamakura Shogunate. He was banished in 1221 and lived in Sado until his death twenty-two years later. He was cremated among those foot-hills, and his ashes sent to rest in imperial Kyoto."

We motored to the temple where once resided the great priest-patriot, Nichiren, founder of a Buddhist sect that is exceedingly powerful today. Its members are often seen on the most populous

thoroughfares of Tokyo, incessantly beating hand-drums and repeating their sacred formula, "*Namu-myo-horen-gekyo*." One must descend several flights of moss-covered steps and go through equally old gates, before reaching the place where Nichiren lived for three solitary years. It is a plain thatched building hidden in a deep, green valley surrounded by pine clad hills.

Sado is known today especially as the isle of song and dance. When we reached the harbour that evening, a musical performance was to be given by the islanders.

"The performers are members of the Kamo Club, which keeps alive the old songs and dances of Sado," explained my host. "According to tradition, the Song of Okesa is more than 300 years old, having been composed near Niigata by the daughter of an immigrant family from Kyoto. Her name was Okesa."

Many times I had heard the Okesa Bushi, in Tokyo as in remote parts of the country. Who in Japan has never heard it or sung it himself? Rightly it may be called the classic of Japanese folk music.

The dance was to take place in the spacious hall of a restaurant. It was already filled with grave-looking people in kimono, squatting in silence, when we arrived, and for a while my friend



was kept busy bowing to the authorities present. At the far end of the hall near the door sat five men in kimono of a uniform sky-blue colour. Two of them had samisen and another a small drum. They were the orchestra; the singers had no music. There was no stage, no scenery, not even a raised platform for the dancers.

The door opened, and six gracefully dancing figures in blue kimono came through one by one. They wore wide straw hats, shaped something like a thin pancake folded in two, tied under the chin with red ribbon. Under them the faces of the men were well hidden, and one could almost have taken the dancers for women. Now they would form a circle, now a single file. White *tabi* glided noiselessly over the golden mats, now forward, now hesitating, now backward, in harmony with the gestures and movements of hands and arms.

First, there was played a song with a rapid rhythm that I had never heard. It was not the familiar Okesa Bushi.

"It is the dance of Ryotsu," said my host, "a song familiar only to the islanders. The people of Aikawa composed a song of their own to compete with that of Ryotsu, but it has not had much success."

While the musicians played, the two singers

would each take a verse in turn, never singing both at the same time. And it was well, for then both had periods of rest. Prolonged singing in Japanese style brings the blood to the head and requires great effort.

After the first verses of the Okesa Bushi, many of the spectators, following the words on the programme, became enwrapped in the music. Silent at first, they began with a faint humming that gradually gained in volume until the words of the song itself were heard, which goes something like this:

“Even the grasses and trees do bend  
Toward far-off Sado.  
Then Sado surely must be fair,  
And a good place to live in!”

## CHAPTER XVII

### *“And the Smoke Ever Rises. . .”*

A landmark familiar to all vessels ploughing through the North Pacific to and from the silk mart of Yokohama is Oshima. It was once called Vries Island, after the Dutch navigator who explored those seas in the 18th century. But to the Japanese it is just plain “Big Island.” Its fitful torch guides mariners by night, for Oshima is an active volcano with a sinister past. It belongs to a whole family of volcanic isles in various stages of activity that extend from Japan to the archipelagoes of the South Seas.

Oshima is a half-submerged volcano of about 36 square miles and although only 63 miles south of the capital, at the entrance of Tokyo Bay, it stands in mysterious isolation save for one boat line that runs during the fine months. About 8,000 hardy islanders live there, in the six fishing villages that hover beneath the crater 2,512 feet high often hidden in sulphuric fumes. They believe that it is the abode of the God of Fire, a superstition shared by many living on the main island of Japan. For long years the abysmal pit of the awful volcano

has fascinated visitors, some of whom did not make the return trip.

It was a gay party of week-enders that boarded the ship with us on a Friday evening, bound for Oshima.

The following morning found us on deck with no thoughts of suicide, in the grey light that immediately preceded the dawn. Then out of the mist loomed up a vast mountain with a broad, flattened peak, on which black clouds were hovering like a pall. As we approached under reduced speed the summit slowly dropped behind the steep side of the island. We had arrived. Lights in the grey village began darting hither and thither like fireflies. A shadowy barge pushed off and finally nestled under the ship's side to take us ashore, for the only quay had been demolished in a recent storm.

No sooner had we set foot on shore than we were surrounded by bare-legged men in short coats, thrusting in our faces paper lanterns on which were written the names of the inns they represented. We chose our man and followed his swinging lantern still burning on the end of its bamboo pole though the dawn had come.

The inn, spread out in every direction, overlooked the town, with the steep side of the volcano behind. Many of our fellow-passengers continued

their interrupted slumber at the inn, but to us a bath was too tempting. We slipped into kimono the maidservant held for us and followed her down endless corridors and over several bridges that connected the inn with its annexes.

The bath was a vast structure by itself, two storeys high. One dim light hung high up among the rafters, and we washed in the semi-gloom of steam rising from the wide, sunken pool. It was only after some time that I remarked that the water looked something like milk.

"It is milk," casually said my friend, who was rinsing off liberally with buckets of fresh water. Thereupon, after this startling assertion he entered the bath and settled down comfortably with a sigh of relaxation. I was too sleepy to protest, but when we were breakfasting back in our room I demanded an explanation. Our maid tittered in amusement.

"Foreigners are always surprised!" she exclaimed. "We put milk in the water, it is so cheap, and we don't always have enough water. Don't you like bathing in it?"

It seemed that there were very few wells on Oshima, causing the inhabitants to devise ingenious means for catching every drop of rain; large reservoirs had been built recently for that. Still milk was more plentiful on the island than water. Oshima has many fine cows, and among dairy products,

camellia oil and charcoal, the three principal exports, milk comes first. "But we never drink it," explained our servant, "as we believe it makes us weak."

My travelling companion was such a good organizer that I let him take care of every detail of the trip. So I was not too surprised when we stepped out of the inn to find a pair of mules awaiting us. Their respective keepers handed us the halters, there being no bridles, and we were off, our men following behind for no apparent reason. We were to find out why later.

The sunken road cut through soft volcanic earth covered with a rich undergrowth of giant ferns that often formed a roof over us. We passed camellia plantations and occasional cherry trees, until these grew scarce, though the vegetation was still of a tropical luxuriance. Tea-houses marked our progress, with names like "Strength," "Prospect," "Maiden," "Tea-House of the Song," to comfort those who go on their pilgrimage afoot to the altar of the Fire God, but it was too early for tea.

After passing "Looking Down Tea-House," our steeds stopped for a rest, ignoring our entreaties to continue. Then we learned why the guides had followed us along. They grabbed the halters and started pulling us up, horse and all. My friend,

being light, made good progress and was soon way ahead. I soon caught up, however, when my man, giving me the halter, began beating my mount on the croup, accompanying each stroke with an exclamation in Japanese mule-language.

Our progress became quite difficult as we left the belt of vegetation, and pushed through the loose cinders of the outer rim of the volcano. My steed lagged behind, perhaps being unaccustomed to foreign barbarians. Then my resourceful guide led the expedition, devoting himself to pulling the mule with the halter, while my friend's guide followed close behind, pulling his mule and beating mine at the same time.

We climbed on in silence as we neared the crater. I was thinking about the suicide statistics, and wondered whether my companion was occupied with similar thoughts. What a harvest the Fire God had reaped throughout the years! In 1933, 831 people made the fatal leap into the abyss, at an average of three a day during the New Year season. What seemed difficult to believe was that the record number of people who had jumped in on the same day was twenty-four.

My fellow traveller asked the guides whether they had ever seen anyone jump into the crater, at which they brightened up, pleased at this occasion to talk.

"I saw several go in last year," answered my guide. "They were all young people, too. They made the fatal leap without hesitating. One boy threw in his wallet and all his clothes before he finally dived in himself."

"One fellow rode up on this very horse," went on the other guide. "He was nineteen years old and training to become a priest. We know, because he left a note in his room at the village inn. He had fallen in love, and saw he could never live to be a priest."

"Don't they try to prevent people from taking their lives?"

"That is very rare; it is too difficult to stop them; the crater is so wide. But some were rescued who had not fallen far. That is truly an awful thing to happen."

I was not sure whether he meant the fall was awful, or whether it was awful to be rescued, but we had just reached the crest of the outer wall of the crater, where we were met with a breeze smelling strongly of sulphur. Ahead, encircling the volcano in a belt nearly half a mile wide, lay a vast expanse of flat, stony land. The islanders call it the desert, a fitting name, as it is sterile, not a single growing thing relieving the monotony of its trackless surface. Beyond it, great clouds of vapour were issuing from behind a high ridge. It was the last barrier.



I had been told that I would find not only a desert, but several genuine Mongolian camels on Oshima. There they were, at the foot of the ridge we had just ascended. Our guides invited us to dismount; they would wait here for our return. To go on would be to trespass in the camel driver's zone of influence: it was the custom to continue the journey atop these two seedy desert barges. My friend was as eager to try the camels as I was to get rid of them, having had one unfortunate accident with one of these beasts at a colonial exhibition. So we set out on foot after all, the camels leering sardonically behind our back.

Finally we scaled a narrow path that led up the steep side of the inner rim. We had reached the highest part of the island, 2,500 feet above sea level. While Oshima was still young in geological years, this would hardly be half way up the conical peak that was later blown off after some cataclysmal eruption. Now a tea-house stands here, the last outpost of civilization for the pilgrim or the would-be suicide. It was kept by a tall, straight-backed woman of middle age and her three daughters, with frank, open expressions, caused by large, deep, almost European eyes, straight nose and strong chin. They wore with grace the *tenugui*—the indispensable cotton towel—with camellia pattern of blue and white, round their abundant hair rolled in a chignon

on the left of the nape. The long, shining hair, the chief pride of these island maidens, is acquired by liberal use of the camellia oil that their fathers make, grinding the nuts in primitive wooden mills.

My companion was soon engaged with them in animated conversation, the outcome of which was that they would sing one or two verses of the local song. They sang rather bashfully, but not without feeling, the plaintive tune so well known in Tokyo.

"We are maids of Oshima  
Brought up by the God of Fire,  
And the smoke ever rises  
From the flame in our bosom."

From the Crater Mouth Tea-House one can look down over the vast chaos of lava boulders strewn on the crater bed. It surrounds the final pit that is sometimes visible between the intermittent clouds of smoke. The tall muscular woman was to be our guide. We had difficulty in following her through the deep ravines between red lava walls and around hills on which boulders of fantastic shapes stood poised ready to roll down at the first puff of wind. She knew the winding path well, if one can call path the traces of ground-up straw from countless sandals, and the pieces of worn out clogs scattered here and there. She leaped from rock to rock with the agility of a gazelle, her strong feet in

pliant sandals, while we bungled among the lava and cut our city shoes.

Finally, breathing sulphur at every step, we reached the edge of the "Holy Place of Suicide," as Mt. Mihara is called by the vernacular newspapers. At times deep rumblings were heard, seeming to issue from the very bowels of the earth. A low barbed-wire fence surrounded the black chasm 300 metres wide.

From our position behind the fence we could not see the molten lava. Our guide warned us not to go any further to look over the edge, as large parts of the ground sometimes gave way, precipitating innocent tourists into the fathomless pit. This fence is the last barrier to those who think life no longer worth living, but it does not deter them if their minds are made up. Only guards posted a few feet apart all round the vast crater could prevent people from making an end of themselves.

My companion asked our fleet guide if she had ever seen anyone rescued after making the leap. She looked at him rather incredulously at first, and began what was to be a long conversation. I learned that she had witnessed most of the tragedies on the island. The one which had impressed her most was that of a young man who had jumped in three winters ago. He had sat on the ledge for nearly three hours, after having asked spectators to

leave him alone, as he wished to meditate. Friends and bystanders pleaded continually with him, but dared not approach for fear that he would jump. But all their arguments were in vain. The youth finally rose, and without a word, took off his coat, folded it neatly, tied a *tenugui* round his head, stepped out of his clogs which he left side by side, and leaped into space.

She still kept a letter she had found near the spot, which explained that, having been accused falsely of stealing, the writer was leaving this world to prove his innocence. Perhaps the young man had left it behind.

"But was anyone ever really saved?" my companion asked again, taking advantage of the break in her conversation. Yes, the woman of the tea-house saw a miraculous rescue two years ago, which seemed as if it had happened yesterday. A young girl and her lover disappeared over the crater's edge together, hoping to find happiness in another world. But soon after they jumped cries were heard for a few seconds, cries coming from within the crater! Islanders immediately began exploring the edge and groping among the fumes, a perilous task. At last they discovered a human form lying on a projecting ledge 20 or 30 feet below. No time was lost in lowering a volunteer dangling on the end of a rope,

into the yawning pit. From his precarious position he tied the body, that of the girl, to the rope, and kept her from striking projecting rocks as she was slowly pulled up, after which he was hoisted up himself. The girl escaped with a few broken ribs and a slight asphyxiation, and was never again seen on the island.

When we returned from our round of inspection, several people had already arrived, standing beside a rude table stacked with saucer-like objects. They were wafers made of baked clay. On seeing us, the pedlar seated at the table got up and threw a wafer in the air to demonstrate. It soared at an angle of forty-five degrees, directly over the crater into the fumes, and was swallowed up by the gaping mouth of the Fire God. In the old days people threw in coins instead. My travelling companion bought two wafers and gave me one.

“To console their spirits,” he said. And we threw them in.

*The Island of  
Eighty-eight Temples*

A happy land for tourists is Shikoku, Japan's south-western isle. It is almost entirely free from fortified zones, except for a limited coastline bordering the two strategic straits separating the island from Honshu on one end and Kyushu on the other. A solitary policeman was standing on the wharf as our ship steamed in from Kobe across the Inland Sea. He and some islanders were much amused when a geisha in high *geta* became intimidated by the inclined gangplank and gratefully accepted the arm of a gallant student.

We found our inn in a little by-way, as unreal as a stage scenery. Two small pine trees stood before the rustic door, first signs of the coming New Year. Tea was brought us, which is the first thing that happens before even discussing the price of the room. There was a mouse in relief on the little cakes accompanying it, because, as our maid explained, in a few days the Year of the Ox would be over and give place to the Year of the Mouse.

Our bill next morning was only two yen,

which did not include dinner, it is true, yet we had three spacious rooms to ourselves in a quiet part of the hotel reached by a private staircase, and an excellent bath.

We took a train which skirted extensive salt fields along the Inland Sea, and then went up country to Zentsuji. This is the birthplace of Kobo Daishi, one of Japan's earliest saints and scholars. When he returned from a voyage to the great Middle Kingdom in 816 A. D., he founded Shingon, the Buddhist sect of the "True Word." Under his supervision were built some of Japan's largest temples and monasteries. He is credited with the invention of the *kana* script, a phonetic alphabet derived from Chinese characters and more popular than ever today. Kobo Daishi is also believed to have invented a steam engine, which, however, he hid in a sealed chest, after reflecting on the confusion this contribution would create in society.

A group of pilgrims with their heads hidden in basket-like hats, jingling their bells and carrying their belongings in a *furoshiki* over one shoulder, passed us on their way from Zentsuji. A familiar sight all through Shikoku are these mendicant priests or simple devotees of Buddha, on pilgrimages to fulfill some vow, or in thanks for prayers granted.

Zentsuji can scarcely be called a town, being

mainly a collection of temple buildings and priests' quarters, in the centre of which rises the graceful pagoda claimed to be the first one built in the land by Kobo Daishi. Zentsuji is one of the first of the Eighty-eight Temples all over Shikoku that all good Buddhists visit in the right order. It is a three month's trip at least for these pilgrims, who spend a few sen daily for travelling expenses and accept the hospitality of the temples at night. But more important to them than food or bed are the consecrated slips of paper they receive from the priests, which they carry in little boxes hanging from their neck. On each tablet is written the date and name of the temple, and its large square seal is stamped in red ink, as proof of their visit.

Especially anxious to visit the Eighty-eight Temples are the maidens of Shikoku, as there is a belief among them that they may have difficulties in finding suitors unless they fill this part of their education.

We found a little withered priest in the Kondo or Gold Pavilion, facing the temple entrance. He was seated on the mats smoking a pipe, and over his bald head hung a great pendulum clock on a pillar, a surprising instrument to find in this quiet temple lost in the country. Behind him in the gloom towered an impassive Dharma about ten feet high, which the guide-book stated was a



wooden figure painted with gold. The little shrivelled-up priest was extremely shocked at this: it was made of metal; what kind of metal he couldn't say; but he was very fond of it.

It was with some difficulty that we turned his interest from the Dharma to the pagoda in the compound; finally he agreed to show us the interior. On stepping in we exchanged our shoes for old straw sandals. We had expected our guide to show us the way up, but he merely bid us a good trip and promised to look after our shoes in the meantime. We soon found out the reason for his lack of enthusiasm on the subject of pagodas. The only way to reach the top was by narrow, ladder-like steps, shooting up perilously amid the framework, and suddenly stopping for no reason to continue in another direction. Our heads bumped against massive beams in the semi-darkness until we were dizzy. At times we seemed lost in a maze of boards and poles, and it was a miracle how we ever reached the top still wearing the sandals. At least we learned what the inside of a pagoda was like, an intricate composition of beams fitted together without nails around five smooth pillars made of single trees.

The fifth balcony of the pagoda topped by several feet the two venerable camphor trees, which tradition says were planted by Kobo Daishi him-

self. This is not too difficult to believe, if one considers the thickness of their trunks and their gnarled limbs.

The old priest greeted us with smiles when we reached the bottom of the stairs, which were almost as difficult to descend as they had been to scale.

“My legs are so stiff these days, you must excuse me!” he apologized. “But I will show you the guardians of this pagoda.”

They were four miniature gods carved in wood, each one astride most singular mounts at the base of each pillar: a white horse, an elephant, a peacock, and a mythical phoenix.

We left our guide where we had found him, seated under his clock, and took the train for Kompira-san, the abode of the god of travellers and seafarers in Kotohira. As we were about to travel through the country of the god himself, and had travelled much in the past without any harm befalling us, it seemed fitting to pay him our respects.

\* \* \*

Kompira's sweeping roofs are half-hidden in a dense grove of pine, cryptomeria and camphor trees on the side of a mountain south of the town. The long main street covered over with canvas for coolness—at the end of December!—is lined at

first by large inns and restaurants. Then the way narrows and is now and then interrupted by flights of steps climbing between rustic souvenir shops. Finally it becomes a path winding up through the forest, along which stone posts form a continual fence. Not ordinary posts are these; each one represents a votive offering by one of the legions of pilgrims that have made this ascent at least once during their life. The first posts bear inscriptions of offerings amounting to one, two, or three yen, together with the name of the donor and the date. A little further on, they already amount to five, ten, fifty yen; while near the end of the climb there are numerous posts inscribed with offerings running into thousands of yen. The Japanese must be inveterate travellers, judging from the prosperity of Kōmpira-san, which ranks second after the Grand shrine of Ise itself in the number of visitors.

It was still early when we reached the top, and only a little old woman was clasping her hands in prayer before the main shrine, perhaps imploring the god of travellers for the safe return of a son at sea. In the compound stood two vast pavilions filled with votive tablets and offerings of every description, all in grand disorder; walls were hung with paintings of steamships, sailing vessels, trains, and even airplanes. There were old prints of sea

battles and illustrated maps of pilgrims' successful journeys. From the ceiling hung models of ships of many types, rusty anchors and anchor chains from real boats; swords; even human hair. We regretted we had nothing to add to this collection except our knapsacks, which we could not do without.

We made the descent in the slowly gathering twilight, down the high street already lit up, although inns and tea-houses were mostly empty. Hunger made us stop at a small restaurant for some *sashimi* and a bottle of saké, for it was becoming chilly. The proprietor was very anxious to please. This was not to be wondered at, as after going down most of the street where we had been constantly greeted by restaurant-owners bowing and inviting us with loud "*Irrasshai!*" and "*Sho-sho o-yasumi ni natte!*" (Please come in, and rest for a while!), we had finally picked out his humble establishment.

When we mentioned saké, the place became all a-bustle, and the only servant girl disappeared, as we supposed, to warm up a *go*.

"The town is rather quiet just now," apologized the proprietor, "but you must come on the New Year. It is very gay then."

The servant had been gone rather a long time, and when she finally reappeared she was in gay kimono, with her neck freshly-powdered and a scent of musk.

"*O machi do sama!*" (I have kept the honourable people waiting!) she said.

But we limited our saké to one bottle each.

"We have a train to catch, you see."

The pretty servant, who had been performing the functions of wine-pourer, showed some disappointment, but all saw us at the door.

"You must drop in again on your way back!" they enjoined us.

\* \* \*

We passed the night at quiet Awa-Ikeda, completely surrounded by mountains. After supper we had some saké warmed up, and felt like a little music.

"How much are geisha here?" we asked the servant.

"One yen eighty for the first hour and another yen for each hour after that."

"Please find us two."

"I shall ask and see," she answered, and was soon back, bringing with her a *samisen*.

"Are the geisha on their way?" we enquired.

"*Hai*, but only one."

"But we asked for two. Didn't you understand?"

The servant fingered her *samisen* nervously and blushed.

"I thought one geisha would be less expensive for the honourable guests. I can play a little."

She played and sang the songs of her country very well. Perhaps it had all been for the fun of competing with a professional musician. At any rate, she would not accept the tip we added the next morning to our moderate bill.

The train we boarded next day for Kochi followed the tumultuous torrent of the Yoshino, between nearly vertical walls. The inhabitants of this secluded valley are mostly descendants of refugees who fled from the old imperial capital of Kyoto, during the wars of the Minamoto and Taira clans. Already the New Year decorations were waving in the wind: six or seven banners of different colours suspended from a rope between two upright poles, much like washing hung out to dry.

As we climbed on, the valley became deeper and wilder; from the mountains opposite topped with frost, rope-ways for transporting wood swung down to the road. Here and there could be seen a ferry boat attached to a cable stretched taut across the rushing stream that one managed alone. Some villages were built almost entirely on poles over the water because of the lack of level ground. Then the divide was crossed, and the train coasted lazily down through many tunnels to the Pacific Ocean, which appeared like molten gold in the afternoon sun.

Kochi was busily preparing for the New Year. Children were seen leaving cake shops carrying three round loaves of *mochi*, the solid, glutinous rice cake. Topped with an orange and some fern, they would decorate the *tokonoma* on New Year's day. Shops selling kitchenware and articles of wicker and straw were doing a rushing business. Several old gentlemen were walking gravely home with new brooms over their shoulders: at least one should begin the new year with a new broom. A rikisha man had bought a rice bucket, a common event in Japan, where everyone receives a generous bonus at the end of the year.

In dimly-lit side streets women were busy cleaning out their houses, or sitting by *hibachi* with newly dressed hair. Children with faces painted and powdered were impatiently awaiting the great day. Barber shops were filled with men being shaved by women; while in the women's hair dressing parlours customers awaited their turns with their hair down, to have it done up in the traditional styles. Photographers would be in demand on New Year's day.

Our native style inn was on a little street that ran down to the river. The entire staff was busily making last minute preparations. Even the manager, hammer in hand, was roaming the halls to find a good spot to hang up a calendar. We saw

the old year out like the good citizens of Kochi; going to bed early with the *kara-koro* of hurrying *geta* outside. We fell asleep before a nearby temple bell had struck all its 108 strokes to usher in the Year of the Mouse.

\* \* \*

After our first bath of the year, a servant fitted out in new kimono, apron and *tabi*, made us drink at least three cups of *o-toso* for wealth, long life and happiness, before we could have one bite of breakfast. Then the manager entered, executing a bow so low that we could see the white family crest on the back of his *haori*.

“*Hajime mashite, o me de to gozai-masu!*” (Congratulations on the opening of the New Year!) His wife came in shortly after with Kiku-san, five years old that morning, who made her little bow with great composure. Downstairs on a raised dais before a golden screen, were the three cakes of *mochi* with a mandarine atop them. A small lacquer box was placed near the steps. Shopkeepers and other people having business connections with *Tomo no Ya* would soon be making their calls, and the black box was to receive their cards.

The citizens of Kochi were all up early, wishing the ancestors a Happy New Year; women in splendid kimono and *obi* of heavy brocade, officials



in morning coats with new gloves, old men in simple peasant dress, and students in shiny uniforms, but all with brand new *geta*, stood before the prefectural shrine with their overcoats off.

We had a pleasant walk along the river lined by fine residences, castles in miniature with gracefully arched walls of warm-coloured stones. Under the walls of a riverside temple, a manufacturer of Japanese umbrellas was planting his half-finished paper *kasa* to dry in the sun, where they looked like giant mushrooms. In this part of Shikoku, umbrella-making is a particularly prosperous occupation, for here their use is not confined to that usually ascribed to umbrellas. They take the place of sails, a fact hard to believe before we saw some small boats skimming over the waters of the bay with *kasa* attached obliquely to their short masts. There could be no more convenient rig for lazy fishermen.

On the way several low carts passed us, drawn by dogs, solid smooth-haired beasts with short legs and broad chest. Two were harnessed to a cart, which they pulled with great will, reminding me of the milk wagon dogs of northern France. These dogs of Tosa province are also famous for their fighting character, and informal battles between them are still organized by their owners.

The following morning we bid farewell to the friendly people of *Tomo no Ya* and boarded the Tosa Maru bound for Shimoda, a town near the southwestern point of the island. It was a very small, one-class boat, and the crew on a large three-masted vessel from the Inland Sea looked down on our decks with a truly paternal air. But the Tosa Maru, her masts decorated with pine branches and the *shimenawa* or taboo rope strung across the gangway, was about to make her first voyage of the year. The captain began another year of her history when he blew his whistle loudly and steamed out under the satisfied gaze of the uniformed director of the line, standing on the quay to see her off.

No sooner had the vessel rounded a point we visited the day before than the energetic steward laid out blankets on the *tatami*-covered platform below and provided each passenger with a head-rest of rush straw. But we had just got up and felt little like going back to sleep. We watched the wild ducks flying low on the waves, the sea-hawk seeking his breakfast, and the many headlands that jutted out into the great, semi-circular bay of Tosa.

Lunch time came all too soon, and we quickly followed the steward below decks where our fellow passengers were already seated round large rice buckets that let out steam when they were

uncovered. The repast was frugal, a bit of dried fish, some pickles and tea. The steward was kept very busy replenishing our rice bowls.

The largest port we called at was Susaki, an ideal harbour in a landlocked bay, once past a small island and a narrow inlet into green unruffled waters, although the surf was heavy outside. The town was huddled close to the shore, for surrounding it there were steep hills covered with forests of pine. Lumber and its by-products were the chief industries. In the still air, the only sound for miles around was the loading of ships by the piers with bundles of wood. The Tosa Maru was loaded with amazing speed; the crew armed with iron hooks formed an endless chain from the dock to the hold, tossing the faggots to each other with such dexterity that the ship was filled up before our eyes. When the signal to cast off was given, a would-be passenger was seen running and frantically waving his arms at us. He was unceremoniously hauled on board by the obliging crew with as much ease as if he had been a bundle of wood himself.

All that remaining afternoon the Tosa Maru steamed down the coast, with one new range of mountains after another rising out of the blue mist or rocky headlands plunging into the sea. As we were still far from Shimoda at sundown, the

captain decided to disembark us at the nearest port, while there was light. After rounding one more cape and some isolated rocks we described a large circle in a bay that sheltered Irino, "Entrance to the Fields." The usual flat-boat put out to sea and came alongside, two braves holding on to the Tosa Maru with long hooked poles, for the waves were high and the propellor churned the water into whirlpools.

Standing in this barge piled high with luggage, we passengers must have looked like shipwrecked voyagers to the inhabitants. Lights were already twinkling in the low cottages, and some children were dancing round a fire on the sands when we landed. A plank was placed between the stern and the beach, along which we all ran in turn, waiting for our chance between waves.

\*            \*            \*

Never had I felt so far away from Tokyo; we were wondering if inns existed in this hamlet, when a voice behind us said in good English,

"You can take the bus to Nakamura."

It was a young naval lieutenant.

"Thank you, how far is it?"

"About twenty minutes away. I'm going there myself to see my family. I'll see you put up at an inn."

A family-like bus with baskets of hens under the seats took us to Nakamura, where our friend insisted on conducting us to a good inn.

"I will say a few words to the manager for you," and after this last courtesy he went home.

"We have no *nagashi* (bath service)," apologized the inn-keeper's wife, "so please excuse the great inconvenience you must suffer. Teru-chan will lead you to the honourable *furo*."

Dressed in the hotel's cotton *yukata* that barely reached to our knees, we followed Teru-chan across the high road to the public bathhouse. She paid our admission fee to an old woman at the counter, so intent on her knitting that she was unaware at first of the foreign invaders, until the servant said,

"Please take care of these foreign gentlemen who are staying at the *Kashiwa Kan*."

The broad-shouldered village lads who filled the large pool so hot that one could almost hear it simmering, made room for us, not without surprise.

"Do you really like Japanese *sento*?" one finally ventured after considerable time had elapsed in silence. When we nodded, he went on,

"Do you prefer it to the Western bath?"

"We like it just as well." At which they feigned astonishment, saying to compliment us,

“*Nihon tsu des’ noh!*” in their peculiar nasal accent (you are quite versed in things Japanese).

“Do you like *daikon*?” the verbal bombardment went on.

“Very much, and raw fish too!” at which answer our amiable inquisitors grinned from ear to ear.

The two servants of the *Kashiwa Kan* sounded like birds as they tittered and laughed and sang while preparing our dinner. Foreigners didn’t come to Nakamura by every boat.

Teru-chan served dinner in the traditional style, filling the rice bowls with even more ceremony than it is usually done in some of Tokyo’s restaurants.

“Have you ever been to Tokyo?” we asked.

“No, I have always lived here, except once when I went as far as Kochi on a vacation.”

“Do you ever have foreign guests?”

“You are the first foreigners that ever came before my eyes,” she admitted in her own idiom, “except for an English lady I saw in Kochi. How beautiful she was!”

The management had a surprise for us the next morning, when the maid, without saying anything, brought in a tray with cups and pitchers, and ran out with a red face as soon as she had set it down. It was coffee, and no doubt a present from the innkeeper. Japanese breakfast, including eggs

in egg-cups, soon followed. While we were enjoying this variegated repast, the innkeeper's wife bowed herself in.

“Did the gentlemen find the eggs boiled to their taste?” she asked, glancing rapidly at our cups to see whether we liked the coffee.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *American Pilgrimage*

**S**NOW still lay on Ten Province Pass, the last barrier before the sunny coast of Izu that the Japanese call their Riviera. Three miles below we would find Atami town in its U-shaped bay, but on the way down we encountered dense fogs. Fortunately on the same road was a massive bus whose tail-lights guided us around fifty or more hair-pin curves down to sea level.

The Japanese Riviera has no sparsely-clad mountains like those along the Mediterranean coast, scorched by the African sirocco. The sea here is as blue, but every hill is covered with pine forests growing to the water's edge. The road climbs up out of Atami and follows every contour of the cliffs. Immediately below is the sea, and above terraces of orange groves. Here one sees how compartmented a country Japan is. One headland after another must be crossed, each one separated by narrow valleys sheltering some thatched roofs and fishing boats. When there are no tunnels, the road climbs over the top, hundreds of feet above the Pacific,



only to dip into another valley whose gentle slopes bear paddy-fields in step-like tiers.

\* \* \*

At Ito one leaves the last trains behind. From there Shimoda can only be reached by automobile or boat. We passed busses on the way that ply between Ito and the tip of Izu peninsula, beyond Shimoda. They do it in four and a half hours' hard riding, for the road is narrow and winding. We met several at unexpected moments that were obliged to back up until the road became wide enough to enable us to pass.

From one headland on the way can be distinguished six promontories reaching out to sea one behind the other. Behind the last, blue in the distance, lay Shimoda. The first treaty port is still as remote from the pulsations of modern life as in the past when the first American fleet in Japanese waters entered its spacious bay.

Shimoda is still an old-world town, with a style of architecture of its own. The streets are lined with walls of stone, not the rough, unhewn kind, but smooth-cut blocks from the sandstone of the district. In fact, most of the town is built of it, a marked contrast to those we passed on our way from Tokyo. Houses are stuccoed grey and decorated with lozenge lattice-work in white that brightens

TERRACED RICE-FIELDS IN SPRING





the sombre walls. The roofs are of heavy tiles, and their edges cemented with white plaster form geometrical designs.

A bearded policeman at the busiest crossing in town signalled to us that all was clear. We stopped by him.

"Do you know of a good hotel near here?" we asked.

Several citizens, on hearing what we wanted, began a lively conversation with the representative of the law.

"The *Izumo-ya!*" one said. "No, the *Hirano-ya!*" cried another.

"This man will show you," said the policeman, as a youth jumped on our running-board.

"First time in Shimoda?" he enquired. "Then you have come to see O-Kichi's tomb? I recommend you also to visit Monkey Island and the Marine Observatory. Stop! There's your hotel on the left. *Sayonara!*" And our voluble guide disappeared round a corner.

\* \* \*

From the second storey balcony of our hotel, a series of rambling buildings connected by long, tile-covered corridors with gardens between them, one can see Shimoda among the mountains surrounding it on almost all sides. The nearest one, a

conical hill known as Shimoda Fuji, stands among the houses on the edge of the town. Shimoda is little spoiled by modernism; even the primary school is built in the old style. Only in one or two spots do the flat roofs of some architectural monstrosity mar the uniform sea of grey tiles.

Shimoda harbour is a succession of enclosed bays with islands guarding the entrance. Among the conical-shaped islands were trim white ships at anchor. The largest is Monkey Island, covered with squat pines and nearly inaccessible. Several families of monkeys live there in splendid isolation, though they are often visited by a man in a row boat bringing them bananas, as there are no fruit trees in their domain. The crack steamships of the Tokyo-Oshima-Shimoda line anchor right under the lee of this island, and the passengers often see some of the inhabitants swinging from branch to branch.

\* \* \*

Not far from our inn is O-Kichi's Museum, a plain frame building that we took for a cinema at first, with its ticket windows and two doors. The interior is a vast hall divided lengthwise by a high board partition. On both sides hang life-size paintings on silk depicting the tragic events in the life of the girl O-Kichi.

First, there was O-Kichi carried by palanquin to the temple-consulate to serve as maid to Townsend Harris; then her first meeting with the consul, depicted as an elderly gentleman with bristling mustachios and heavy beard. There was O-Kichi the nurse at the bedside of the hairy barbarian; O-Kichi jeered at in the streets by her own people; O-Kichi bullied by fanatical *ronin* to murder her master.

As we went around to the other side of the partitions, the paintings showed the events that resulted in the suicide of Shimoda's famous woman. There were the Black Ships steaming out of Shimoda harbour, O-Kichi leaning faintly against a tree, watching the fleet as it disappeared below the horizon; dishevelled O-Kichi drowning her grief in saké; then her fatal leap into the pond outside Shimoda.

We managed to leave the museum without buying all the sets of post-cards and the silk scrolls picturing O-Kichi's romance and tragic end, the handkerchiefs with her portrait, or the towels bearing on them a verse of the song of O-Kichi:

*Kago de yuku no wa*  
    *O-Kichi ja nai ka*  
*Shimoda minato no*  
    *Haru no ame*  
*Nakeba tsubaki no*  
    *Hana ga chiru.*

“Is that not O-Kichi-san  
Riding in her palanquin?  
When weeps the spring rain of Shimoda port  
The petals fall from the camellia tree.”

\* \* \*

It was too late to visit Gyokusenji, the temple which for more than a year served as the first American consulate on Japanese soil. We would go there next morning, as it was on the other side of the harbour, on the edge of town. How to pass the evening was the question.

Down the main street in a glare of light were several horizontal banners flying from bamboo poles, announcing the programme of Shimoda's only theatre. Forty sen was the price of admission. The show had not yet begun, as the curtain was rung up at eight, instead of six or earlier as in Tokyo. Theatre, players and spectators differed very little from those in Harris' time. For the American consul was often entertained by actors and wrestlers to help pass the long evenings waiting for the news from home that never seemed to come.

The theatre was in pure native style, a vast expanse of matted floor divided up like a chequer-board. A balcony of several tiers went around the hall. After exchanging our *geta*—loaned to us by the inn—for the straw sandals of the theatre, we

followed an old woman upstairs and sat on the thin cushion she gave us. The attendant re-appeared shortly afterward with a lighted *hibachi* and an old-fashioned tobacco set. However, we would have to supply our own pipe and tobacco.

Down in the *parterre* whole families grouped round *hibachi* were eating and drinking with the unconcern of people in their own houses. The women had their hair done up in the old styles, while the men still wore their felt caps, or towels tied round the forehead as a badge of their profession.

The play was rather easy to follow, as the plot was simple and the acting amateurish. One heard words not intended for the audience. From our balcony we could see a little girl, who thought she was well-hidden by some canvas trees, watching her father on the stage. Someone whispered a hoarse "*Mo ii!*" (Enough!) to the principal actor, who was casting obvious side-long glances off stage. Perhaps he was stalling because some player was late coming in. Then the word "*Mada!*" (Not yet!) was distinctly heard through the theatre, although it had been intended for a man off stage, warning him that it was not yet time to make his entrance.

There was a bit of realistic acting in the *chambara* play full of sword fights and bloody ambushes. The swiftness and agility of the samurai kept one



glued to his seat, even though their swords did not shine like steel and only clashed with a dull sound. But the parries and the wild rotations described by the swords of these warriors closing in on each other, although they were only conventional movements, were like the real thing when seen through half-veiled eyes.

Shimoda people keep late hours: it was well past midnight when the play was over. But the Hana Machi (Flower Town)—a narrow street along a canal crossed by several half-moon bridges, was just beginning to do business. Here Huesken the Hollander made his conquests eighty years ago. His red beard must have created much mirth among the belles of Shimoda, whose successors now sit as in the past, by the great casks of saké in the hall, inviting the passer-by to tarry a while. Shadows flitted across the *shoji* of upper stories, and the plucking of *samisen* floated over the roofs with ripples of feminine laughter.

At the end of this street bedecked with paper lanterns stands Ryosenji Temple in its dim compound. It owes its fame to a supplementary treaty concluded there in 1854, fixing the landing points and provisioning ports for American ships. It is quite a lonely spot now, tucked under a steep hill, compared to its illustrious rival Gyokusenji.

We started off early the next morning on the last stage of our leisurely pilgrimage, along the road skirting the bay. Near Gyokusenji is Bentenjima, a great block of sandstone carved in curious manner by wind and wave. As it was low tide, we reached it on foot. On it is a small shrine dedicated to Benten, but the island has always been associated with the name of Yoshida Shoin, the loyalist-adventurer. He had made a desperate attempt to go to America, an attempt which cost him his life, as to leave Japan was a capital offence. With a companion Yoshida rowed from the island one night in a storm to Commodore Perry's Black Ships in the bay. He reached the ship only to be turned over to the Japanese authorities, and after languishing a while in prison, was finally executed.

We sat in the sun leaning against the shrine and looked out over the calm waters, imagining the spot where the American frigates used to anchor. It was not far from the island, as Harris could see their masts from the steps of his temple-consulate.

It stands a little back from the road on a small eminence with green hills behind. Many changes has it suffered since those early days as a consulate of the United States. One need only compare the present structure with the sketch made by Huesken the interpreter. The old thatched roof typical

of country temples has been replaced by an ugly copper one, changing the whole appearance of the building. Only the wooden gateway remains intact, worn thin by the weather.

The very business-like head priest, who greeted us in good English, asked almost point-blank, his eyes twinkling:

“Do you believe in the Harris—O-Kichi romance?”

With some embarrassment, we admitted we did.

“Well, I don’t,” he stated conclusively with Occidental directness. And he led us into one side of the temple overlooking a pleasant garden.

“This room was formerly occupied by the interpreter Huesken,” recited the priest. “As you see, it has been transformed into a museum of Harris relics. It is the best part of the temple for living purposes, besides being on the right as you face the building. Open to the south-west, it catches the summer breeze. Yet the American consul refused to live in it. Why? Because the quarters of the Chinese cooks were on the other side of the garden.”

While he was talking we inspected the glass cases filled with odds and ends such as a blackened pipe, some cigars, or what was left of them, two silver dollars and a badly chipped, wine-coloured glass.

“The workmen restoring the temple found them all behind the boards that you see running around the upper part of the rooms,” our guide explained.

On the walls were some faded portraits of Harris and Perry, an old photograph of the consular staff, and an original water colour of the temple, signed Huesken.

“What is this?” we asked our priest-guide, pointing to a tall glass case in the corner containing what seemed to be a piece of water-soaked wreckage.

“Ah! That,” smiled the priest, “is all that is left of a tree which grew in the compound by the temple steps. They used to tie a cow to that tree, the only cow in Shimoda. The consul, during his illness, expressed a desire for milk, and a cow was finally obtained after many difficulties.”

But he seemed most impatient to show us a pile of yellow volumes whose leaves were covered with fine Japanese script. There were eight of them altogether.

“They are a faithful narrative of Harris’ entire stay in Shimoda,” he began. “The town elders recorded in them every little event in the consul’s life, from day to day. I have read them all. And I found nothing to confirm the Harris—O-Kichi myth; quite the contrary.”

“What brought you to that conclusion?”

“I compared dates. These volumes show that O-Kichi was only employed four months as waitress in the consulate. And the consul’s illness did not begin until some time after she had been replaced by the maid O-Fuku. You can rely on that journal,” he added. “It accounted for every single potato sold to the cooks.”

So the popular story of O-Kichi nursing Townsend Harris back to health and comforting him in his solitude was only a legend after all. Yet the whole town of Shimoda believed it.

“I’ll tell you why I don’t believe in a romance,” went on the priest, who saw we were not convinced. “Townsend Harris was once active in Sunday school work before he became an envoy of the United States. I have written a treatise about it all.”

We didn’t know that, but expressed interest in his treatise.

“I will give you a copy when I’ve shown you through the rest of the temple. It’s only fifty sen.”

We crossed the main hall, once the room where officials and high personages were received. It was now used for worship as of old.

The priest pointed to a hole in the wall. “It was for the stove-pipe. We left it there to show.” A little of the original paper still clung to some

walls. The fine old beams were gone over with shellac when the temple was "restored."

"Where you see the Buddha now was the dining room. That is the only part of the temple which has a wooden floor."

We followed him into Harris' dismal room in the left wing. It looked out into the nearby woods. "Even in summer no sun gets in here," said our guide. Perhaps that brought on the consul's illness. The priest stuck his head out of the window and showed us two rusty nails in the wall.

"All that is left of a bathroom addition that Harris had built. This window became the connecting door. So you can imagine he didn't get much light then."

The consul's room was separated from the main reception hall merely by curtains. There were no sliding doors in the temple.

We bought one of the treatises that exploded the O-Kichi myth, and thanked our guide for his trouble.

"It is right in this compound that Harris once tried walking with O-Kichi's *geta*," then he added, as a last friendly sally to win us over to his story, "The people love such tales!"

In the compound are the graves of some sailors of Perry's fleet, and not far from them,

those of three Russians from the frigate *Diana*, wrecked by a tidal wave in Shimoda harbour.

A tall granite slab now stands on the spot where was raised the first American flag on Japanese soil. On it is carved this excerpt from the diary of Townsend Harris:

“Thursday, September 4, 1856. Slept very little from excitement and mosquitoes—the latter enormous in size. At seven a.m. men came on shore to put up my flag-staff. Heavy job. Slow work. Spar falls: breaks cross-trees, fortunately no one hurt. At last get a reinforcement from the ship. Flag-staff erected, men form a ring around it, and, at two and a half p.m. of this day, I hoist the first consulate flag ever seen in this empire. Grim reflections—ominous of change—undoubted beginning of the end. Query,—if for the real good of Japan?”

Prophetic words by a friend of Dai Nippon.

## A GLOSSARY OF JAPANESE WORDS USED IN THE TEXT

<b>Amai</b>	Sweet
<b>Ama-zake</b>	A drink of sweetened barley water (lit. sweet saké)
<b>Ami</b>	Fishing nets
<b>Arigato</b>	Thanks. <i>Arigato gozaimasu</i> (more polite form)
<b>Asari</b>	Kind of shell-fish
<b>Banchi</b>	Lot number in any inhabited district
<b>Banzai!</b>	Hurrah! (lit. ten thousand years)
<b>Biwa</b>	A kind of lute
<b>Chambara</b>	Sword-play
<b>Chin-don-ya</b>	Itinerant orchestra for advertising purposes
<b>Daikon</b>	Giant horse-radish
<b>Depahto</b>	Department store
<b>Dohyo-iri</b>	Ceremonial entry of wrestlers in the ring
<b>Éboshi</b>	Tall pointed hat
<b>Furo</b>	Bath
<b>Furoshiki</b>	Square cloth used for wrapping up and carrying things in
<b>Futon</b>	Bedding
<b>Geta</b>	Wooden clogs
<b>Gidayu</b>	Song ballad of the classical theatre
<b>Gogai</b>	Extra
<b>Gomen nasai</b>	Pardon me
<b>Gomu-gutsu</b>	Rubber boots (lit. gum-shoes)



Hai!	Yes!
Haiku	Seventeen-syllabled verse
Hajime mashite, o-me-de-to!	A Happy New Year!
Hajime masho!	Let's begin!
Hakama	Divided skirt worn by men, and students of both sexes
Hamaguri	Clam
Haori	Short garment with wide sleeves worn over the kimono
Hibachi	Glazed earthenware brasero half full of ashes for burning charcoal
Hi-no-ban	Fire-watchman
Irasshai!	Welcome, come in! (lit. step up)
Irasshai-mase!	Welcome! (used by women)
Kagura	Shinto religious dance and music
Kai-bashira	Ligament of a certain large shell-fish
Kakemono	Long, hanging scroll depicting scenery, portrait or calligraphy
Kana	Japanese phonetic script
Karuta (Port. <i>carta</i> )	Card game in which poems are matched, also called <i>Hyakunin-isshu</i> (Collection of poems of one hundred men and women)
Kamishibai	Kind of portable theatre for children (lit. paper play)
Kara-koro	Onomatopoeic word for the sound of <i>geta</i>
Kasa	Umbrella of oiled paper and bamboo ribs
Koku	'By air mail'
Kotatsu	Pan of charcoal enclosed in wooden cage covered with a quilt
Maku-no-uchi	Senior wrestlers (lit. within the curtain)
Mochi	Cakes of glutinous pounded rice
Mo jiki desu!	You're almost there!
Mukimi	Shell-fish with the shells off

Nagashi	Bath service
Namu Amida Butsu!	May his soul rest in peace!
Namumyo horen- gekyo!	Homage to the Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law!
Natsu-mikan	A kind of grape-fruit (lit. summer mandarine)
Natto	Fermented red beans

O-machi do sama!	I have kept you waiting!
Omiyage	Souvenir gift
Ondo	Song and chorus for dancing
O-toso	Sweet ceremonial saké used at New Year.
O-yama wa seiten	Fine weather on the honourable mountain"

Rokkon shojo!	May our six senses be purified!
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Samisen	Three-stringed instrument with long neck and oblong sound box
Sashimi	Slices of raw fish
Sento	Public bath-house (lit. one sen hot water)
Seppuku	Disembowelment
Shakuhachi	Bamboo flute
Shijimi	Kind of shell-fish
Shimenawa	Shinto taboo rope
Shina-soba	Chinese-style noodles served in soup with pork and greens
Sho	Ancient reed organ
Shoji	Sliding walls of lattice framework covered with translucent paper
Sho-sho o-yasumi ni natte	Please rest a little while (local dialectic expression)
Shoyu	Soy bean sauce used in cooking and at table in place of salt
Sumo	Wrestling
Sushi	Ball of specially seasoned rice on which is laid a slice of raw fish, fried egg, shell-fish, shrimp, etc.

<b>Tachi-gui</b>	Outdoor booth in front of which one stands to eat (lit. standing-eating)
<b>Tatami</b>	Thick close-fitting mats of rice straw that cover the floors of houses
<b>Tempura</b>	Fish rolled in batter and dipped in boiling oil till tender
<b>Tofu</b>	Bean curd
<b>Tokonoma</b>	Alcove in a corner of a room, especially in the main room
<b>Torii</b>	Kind of gate at entrance of Shinto shrines
<b>Tsukuda-ni</b>	Marine products boiled down and preserved in <i>shoyu</i> (lit. cooked in Tsukuda-style)
<b>Ya</b>	House, shop, pedlar, vendor, also like "y" in bakery
<b>Yakatabune</b>	A pleasure boat with roof and matted floor (Yakata boat)
<b>Yobidashi</b>	Crier
<b>Yukata</b>	Light summer cotton kimono





昭和十四年 六 月 十 一 日 印 刷  
昭和十四年 六 月 十 五 日 發 行

KARAKORO

著作權所有



著 者 Henry Noël

發行 象 中 土 義 敬  
印 刷 者

Y. NAKATSUCHI

東京市神田區錦町三丁目十二番地

發 行 所 北 星 堂 書 店

東京市神田區錦町三丁目十二番地

電 話 神 田 一 四 二 九 番

振 替 口 座 東 京 一 六 〇 二 四 番

THE HOKUSEIDO PRESS

KANDA, TOKYO, JAPAN

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